

Socialist Worker

For a socialist alternative to New Labour

80p

DON'T ATTACK IRAQ DEMONSTRATION

Five weeks to the march



Called by
the Stop the
War Coalition
and Muslim
Association
of Britain

‘It’s important for all trade unionists to speak out and march against the war. This march will show that the government has no mandate to support a US-led invasion’

BILLY HAYES, general secretary CWU union

‘George Bush and Tony Blair are looking increasingly isolated in their drive for war on Iraq.’

Let’s show by building a massive demonstration in London that the popular mood across the world is for peace, not war’

JEREMY CORBYN MP



Picture: JESS HURD reportdigital.co.uk



Poverty, disease, global warming

by **ACTIVISTS IN JOHANNESBURG**

SOUTH AFRICAN workers, landless labourers, campaigners and activists are preparing a massive demonstration outside the Earth Summit in Johannesburg.

Inside the plush corridors of the conference complex in Sandton, surrounded by police and barbed wire, politicians and businessmen will be meeting from Monday.

They will claim to care about the poor and the environment. But really they will be discussing how best to protect profits.

Outside there will be a huge protest on 31 August.

Vocal

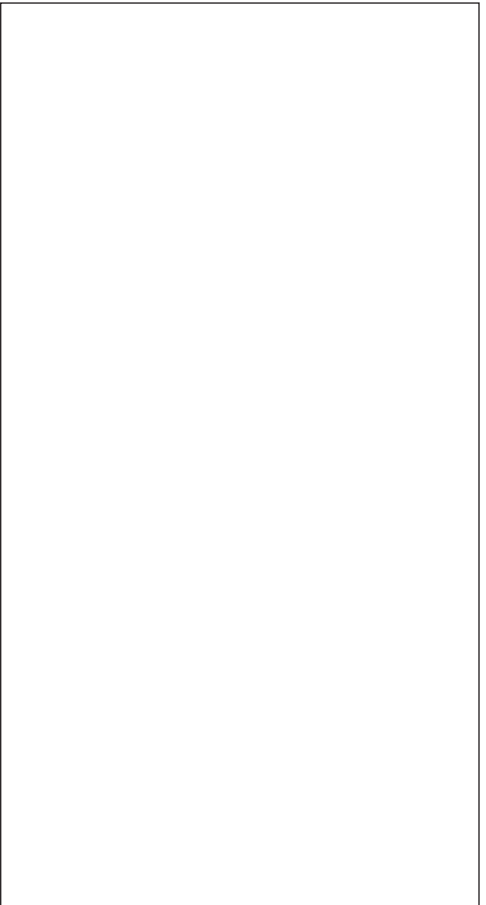
“The summit is a gathering of the rich and powerful, it is a gathering of the hypocrites, it is a gathering of the exploiters. We’ll take Sandton,” said Trevor Ngwane, a protest organiser, last week.

As a South African newspaper commented, “South Africa can expect the same vocal protest that has accompanied major global gatherings since the 1999 Seattle summit of the World Trade Organisation.”

Dennis Brutus, a veteran anti-apartheid campaigner and political prisoner, called the gathering “a summit designed to increase hunger and hardship”.

We should stand in solidarity with the protesters.

PROTESTERS BRAND SUMMIT A SHAM



Bush ships arms to the Gulf. He’s getting ready for war

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When Britain and US ‘changed regimes’ in Iraq

pages 8 & 9

How a multinational poisoned a city in India

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Retreat on elderly care

THE GOVERNMENT has scrapped its plans to force owners of private care homes to improve conditions for elderly residents.

Instead health secretary Alan Milburn is allowing private homes to stay as they are, no matter what the conditions.

Elderly people in private homes often face miserable conditions and neglect.

Private care home owners claimed the regulations—which would have forced them to upgrade their facilities and increase minimum room sizes—were forcing them out of business.

Now the government has bowed to the argument that the rapid rate of home closures in the last two years was due to the proposed regulations.

But the closures are a direct result of the logic of privatisation.

The rush for profits means that small nursing home owners are forced out of business or gobbled up by the big firms which dominate the nursing home business.

A spokesperson for Help the Aged said the real issue behind the home closures was “more to do with inadequate government funding for residential care”.

Networked for profits

NETWORK Rail is the not for profit company due to take Britain's railways over from Railtrack this autumn.

The company is already demanding more money than Railtrack was getting to keep the railways working.

Network Rail has asked for £13.6 billion to run the core rail network, £3.6 billion more than had been allocated for Railtrack.

The company is already backed by £21 billion of government loans.

No bust for PPP firms

WHILE stockmarkets yo-yo around the world, the gravy train is picking up speed in one sector of the economy.

The biggest private companies involved in the government's Public-Private Partnerships have seen their share prices rise by 5 percent in the last month.

Gordon Brown's spending review promised £61 billion more for health and education, much of which will go straight into the pockets of these companies.

Balfour Beatty, a major contractor in the sell-off of London Underground, has seen its share price climb by 7 percent since it revealed its record £4.3 billion order book last Wednesday.

New Labour connections

A DIRECTOR of the firm which got the lion's share of lucrative consultancy work for local councils pushing council housing privatisation has bunged New Labour £10,000.

Jeff Zitron is a director of the HACAS Chapman Hendy firm. It gets the biggest chunk of consultancy contracts for councils following government policy to push council housing privatisation.

The firm makes millions from the deals.

According to the *Inside Housing* magazine, Zitron has made a donation of £10,000 to New Labour.

He denies any connection between these facts.

BUSH PREPARES FOR WAR

US ships arms to blast Iraq

THE UNITED States has accelerated its military build-up in the Gulf.

According to the *New York Times* the US Pentagon has hired ten cargo ships to transport helicopters, armoured vehicles and other weapons in preparation for an attack on Iraq.

The US is also expanding its Al Udeid airbase in the Gulf state of Qatar, where 3,300 military personnel are already stationed.

US president George Bush met top advisers this week to hammer out details of the war plan.

One leaked plan includes having four US aircraft carriers and Britain's *Ark Royal* in the Gulf this autumn.

Bush's build-up for war takes place at the very time that divisions over the war are deepening.

Unease

Even hardened war-mongers in the US establishment, who Bush should be able to rely on, are wary.

Their concern is not for peace, but that Bush's war drive risks backfiring.

Among those expressing unease are Cold War veterans who orchestrated war and intervention in Vietnam and Latin America.

They include Henry Kissinger, Brent Snowcroft, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Lawrence Eagleburger, and former presidents Gerald Ford and George Bush Sr.

Of course, these brutes are not part of the anti-war movement.

But the growing unease is creating more space for such a movement to grow.

Bush has responded by promising to “listen to Republican critics”. But he has made it known he is still determined on war.



Disquiet grows in Labour US generals admit aiding gas attack

DIVISIONS IN New Labour over a war against Iraq are widening.

“Friends of Robin Cook”, the former foreign secretary, say he is spearheading calls for a debate within the cabinet over it.



COOK

“Friends of chancellor Gordon Brown” are also reported to have said he is “unconvinced” of the case for a pre-emptive attack on Iraq.

Tony Blair shows every sign of backing Bush to the hilt. Deputy prime minister John Prescott let slip last week that MPs will not get a vote on whether to go to war.

He said the decision would be made by Blair. Any vote in parliament would be on a technical procedure of whether to “adjourn the house”.

This is adding to disquiet on Labour's back benches.



PRESCOTT

Gerald Kaufman, from the right wing of the Labour Party, warned last week of “substantial resistance” if Blair follows “the most intellectually backward US president of my lifetime” into war.

THE US military secretly gave Iraq decisive battle planning assistance during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, despite knowing Iraqi commanders would unleash poisoned gas.

Senior military officers have told the *New York Times* about their direct knowledge of the programme.

This blows a hole in one of the main excuses the US government is using for war.

Only last week George Bush's national security adviser Condoleezza Rice claimed Saddam Hussein's

use of poison gas justified “regime change” in Iraq.

The *New York Times* report shows that Ronald Reagan's administration (in which Bush's father was vice-president) helped the Iraqi military target those gas attacks.

Some 5,000 Kurdish civilians were gassed in the village of Halabja in 1988.

Retired colonel Walter Lang was a top US intelligence officer at the time. “The use of gas by the Iraqis was not a matter of deep concern,” he said.

Firm behind vaccine scandal

THE pharmaceutical firm PowderJect is at the centre of a new controversy.

PowderJect sparked a row last spring when it was awarded a £32 million government contract to produce a smallpox vaccine—after its boss donated £100,000 to the Labour Party.

Now the Irish government claims that the TB vaccine produced by the company is substandard.

It is contacting some 30,000 children who have been given the vaccine over the last two years.

PowderJect also supplies TB vaccines to schools and health authorities across Britain.

Sample tests at PowderJect's Liverpool factory have found to be below the strength necessary to meet licensing standards.

This has happened at a

time when TB, once nearly eradicated in Britain, is on the rise again.

The research group Datamonitor says there is evidence that Britain may now be heading for a TB epidemic.

But Blair's government is refusing re-vaccination for the children who received PowderJect's vaccine.

PowderJect plans to make its smallpox vaccine at

the same Liverpool factory.

This plant was severely criticised in 1999 by the US food and drug regulator. The regulator was “horried” by the state of the laboratories, then under a different ownership.

A former employee said, “It's the same vaccine, the same factory, the same scientists, and [most of] the same managers—just a different owner.”

Outrage as lesbian and gay festival cancelled

MANCHESTER police have forced the cancellation of one of the largest lesbian and gay events in Europe.

The Manchester Mardi Gras was due to take place this weekend.

But organisers were forced to abandon it because police plans would have pushed over

100,000 people into a small area, threatening a “disaster of Hillsborough proportions”.

The police and council banned drinking alcohol in the street two years ago.

Despite three weeks of negotiations police refused to allow an “alcohol tolerance zone” big enough for the Mardi Gras to take place.

John Hamilton of the Mardi Gras organising committee says, “There has never been any trouble associated with this event.”

“All we can say is that a homophobic decision has been made.”

People vented their fury at the police at an emergency public meeting on Monday night.

They heard police had

planned to erect gates at either end of Canal Street, where most gay venues are, to force revellers into a mini-ghetto.

One person shouted, “Why don't they just put pink triangles on us as well?”

Canal Street and the Mardi Gras are popular with large numbers of straight people, as well as lesbians and gay men.

Planned events in indoor venues were to take place this weekend.

Lesbian and gay activists also called for a mass turnout on a protest demonstration on Saturday.

And there is anger at Manchester council for refusing to intervene to save the event, even though it draws millions of pounds to the city.

Rulers' ten years of broken promises

THE EARTH Summit starts in Johannesburg, South Africa, next week.

World leaders will talk about tackling poverty, dealing with the environmental crisis and embracing "sustainable development".

US president George W Bush is hostile even to making such noises. This could lead some people to think that the summit must contain something good.

The truth is that the gathering is dominated by those responsible for the awful state of the world. The plans they will push in Johannesburg will make things worse, not better.

Ten years ago world leaders gathered for the first Earth Summit, in the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro. They pledged action on poverty and the environment.

A key promise was that richer countries would massively step up aid to the poorest countries.

Every one of the rich countries at Rio vowed to at least double its aid budget, to 0.7 percent of economic output.

Since then aid has been cut. It is down to a miserable 0.22 percent of economic output across the rich countries.

In Rio governments also pledged to cut the debt burden on the world's poorest countries. Instead it has soared by a third to £1.7 trillion, and now kills 19,000 children every day.

Tackling the threat of climate change and global warming was another key pledge at Rio.

Leaders said they would cut emissions of carbon dioxide, the main gas responsible for climate change. But between 1990 and 2000 global carbon dioxide emissions grew by a staggering 9.1 percent a year.

That madness means we will see more of the extreme weather that has been seen recently.

These catastrophes have been accelerated by the policies of the giant corporations, governments and institutions such as the IMF, World Bank and WTO.

They argue that nothing should stand in the way of global capitalism. Yet it is this system that lies behind growing poverty and the threat of environmental disaster.

In Johannesburg they are offering more of the same. Gone is even the pretence that global regulation of the system is the answer.

It is in building the movements—against capitalism, its poverty, environmental catastrophes, and its wars—that the hope for a future for the world and its people lies.

PENSIONS FIGHT HOTS UP

WORKERS AT the Caparo steel group staged Britain's first strike in defence of the final salary pension last week and planned another day's strike this week.

Final salary schemes guarantee a pension based on what you earn. Employers have been rushing to change to schemes which gamble workers' future on the stock exchange.

This is what Caparo did in April—for

existing workers as well as new recruits.

The strikes are taking place among 300 workers at Caparo plants in Scunthorpe, Tredegar and Wrexham.

Eddie Lynch, the assistant general secretary of the strikers' ISTC union, said, "The company has to recognise the sense of anger and anguish it has caused our members and their families. All they want is the security in retirement they have

saved for."

The ISTC added that the company had taken a ten year "holiday" from making payments into the pension fund up until 2000. Meanwhile workers continued to contribute to the fund!

All three sites affected are part of the Caparo group of companies which is owned by Labour peer Lord Paul of Marylebone.

Picture: HULL NEWS & PICTURES

LOVE MUSIC HATE RACISM

Sunday 1 September

**11am demonstration, Manchester Town Hall, Albert Square
Carnival at Platt Fields Park, Manchester**

**MS DYNAMITE_m DOVES_m THE SHINING_m HEARTLESS CREW
BILLY BRAGG_m MISS BLACK AMERICA_m NICKY BLACKMARKET & MC
FOXY_m PHI-LIFE CYPHER_m RODNEY P & SKITZ_m PLUS MANY MORE
TWO STAGES_m DANCE MARQUEE_m KIDS AREA_m STALLS_m FOOD AND DRINK**

**Organised by the
Anti Nazi League
Phone 020 7924
0333 for transport**

CARNIVAL AGAINST THE NAZIS

comment

Stopping us from dancing in the streets

THE BRITISH state, at best, has always had a two-faced attitude towards multiculturalism.

On the one hand it likes to trumpet the supposed “tolerance” at the heart of British culture.

On the other it does its best to undermine multiculturalism by its promotion of racism through immigration policy, policing and the routine institutional discrimination maintained in housing, education and the jobs market.

Once there was a rising curve of anti-racist or multicultural events organised with the help of local councils. Today the number is falling dramatically.

Hardly a week in the summer goes by without yet another event being cancelled because the authorities have come to see them as a nuisance.

In Birmingham the International Caribbean Carnival has been cancelled after the council pulled the plug, saying it could not afford the £200,000 it provided last year.

In west London, Ealing council has cancelled the popular Mela festival due to “traffic costs”.

In Dudley in the West Midlands the local carnival has been stopped from going ahead by the police who claimed, according to the *Voice* newspaper, that 15,000 gun-toting black people were going to turn up.

The African Caribbean population of Dudley is only 3,500.

The carnival would have been a great way of pulling people together in an area where the BNP Nazis have been trying to get a foothold.

As one angry local resident put it, “The feeling in our community, particularly among our young black men, is that even when we try to conduct ourselves properly we are still classified as criminals.”

“Black people have the right to assemble and the right to celebrate our culture like anybody else.”

And to cap it all the Anti Nazi League “Love Music—Hate Racism” carnival to be held in Burnley has had to be moved to Manchester after Burnley’s Labour council blocked it.

Riots

Of course the BNP was allowed to hold its Nazi rally a few miles down the road.

Perhaps the attitude of the authorities is seen best through the history of the Notting Hill carnival.

It began in 1964 as an intensely political affair following race riots in the area. It was, for many, a way of putting two fingers up to the racists in government and on the streets.

For years the authorities have indicated their displeasure at the continuation of an event now attracting up to two million people. It was and is an event that seems to be not just beyond their understanding but, more crucially, their control.

At last year’s carnival 10,000 police were on duty at a cost of £5.5 million. It was precisely such swamp tactics that provoked riots in the past.

In fact the history of car-

GARY McFARLANE looks at the authorities’ attitude towards carnivals in Notting Hill and elsewhere

nival has shown that, given the number of people in attendance, it is generally a peaceful, friendly multicultural celebration.

Last year there were only 35 people arrested, mainly for drunkenness.

Serious outbreaks of disorder, otherwise known as rioting, have only ever occurred in reaction to police provocation.

But just as generally some of the press and politicians peddle the myth that street crime is rising because the police are not stopping and searching enough black kids, so there is also a demonising of the carnival.

Waste

However, last year a Greater London Authority working group headed by Lee Jasper proposed that the carnival should be radically rerouted. So for the carnival this time the circular procession will be changed to end up in Hyde Park.

The GLA also came up with the fabulous idea of utilising waste ground near Wormwood Scrubs prison and of taking many carnival events out of the Notting Hill area altogether!

Many people fear that Ken Livingstone and his advisers want to strip the carnival completely of political overtones and grassroots community involvement.

Lee Jasper, speaking on behalf of the GLA, said, “It was felt by all that in recent years what began as a spontaneous celebration has grown into Europe’s largest street festival and become a victim of its own success.”

It’s all a far cry from Lee Jasper’s days at the Mangrove Centre, a focal point for police harassment since the carnival’s inception.

When interviewed by *Socialist Worker* in 1989, he underlined how the carnival was controversial because it was anti-racist, and that it upset the police because it was ordinary people taking over the streets.

Get along to carnival and enjoy, but defending its future will require the ordinary people who attend such events to start to exert themselves politically.

It is time for the anti-racist majority to get organised, not just to beat back the BNP, but also the racists in the corridors of power and those who refuse to confront them head on.

inside the system

Writing for Hitler

NOVELIST P G Wodehouse was knighted just before his death thanks to the personal intervention of the then Labour prime minister, Harold Wilson, in 1974.

This was revealed in government papers released last week.

The creator of the upper class twit character Bertie Wooster gave a series of interviews for the Nazis’ German radio station during the Second World War while stranded in occupied Europe.

Wodehouse also wrote for the French paper *Gringoire* before the war.

This was a virulently anti-Semitic rag linked to the fascist Action Française organisation.

★ **THE Liberal Democrats in Islington have just appointed a new council chief executive. It’s Helen Bailey. The council’s recruitment consultant said she was not the strongest candidate. Bailey was until recently a member of the Liberal Democrats’ Federal Executive.**

Return to sender

THERE MAY be something to Elvis sightings after all.

Last week, the 25th anniversary of his death, brought an intriguing announcement from a Tennessee University official in Elvis’s hometown of Memphis.

Dan Goldowitz revealed that the Genome Department is looking to clone the King from a “bread bag” full of his hair.

“We can do it,” says Goldowitz.

“There’s a tendency for genetic abnormality to occur.

“We’d get an Elvis, but maybe he would just want to deliver the mail.”

Express yourself

THE REFUGEE-bashing *Daily Express* pictured sixth formers celebrating successful A-level results.

Somehow they did not include one 17 year old who did extraordinarily well.

Perparim Shehu from North London will be going to university to study medicine.

Perparim arrived in Britain at the age of 14 without his family.

He was unable to speak English, and was denied a school place for six months.

He is a refugee from Kosovo.

Is this what Bush defends?

ONE DEATH will be forgotten in the commemorations by the New York authorities of the events of 11 September.

Jason-Eric Wilson was 16 years old when he killed himself in a homeless shelter in New York two weeks ago.

He died tragically after swallowing every pill he could find in his family’s room.

Jason and his ten year old sister were being raised by their father, who had been diagnosed with leukemia.

His father’s illness became acute in the last year after the family were evicted from their home.

Last month they ended up in New York’s appallingly overcrowded shelter system.

The family, like hundreds of others, had to spend two days and a night sleeping on

the floor of the Emergency Assistance Unit.

Jason-Eric’s father applied for food stamps on 30 July. He has been unable to work since a bone marrow transplant.

The request was refused.

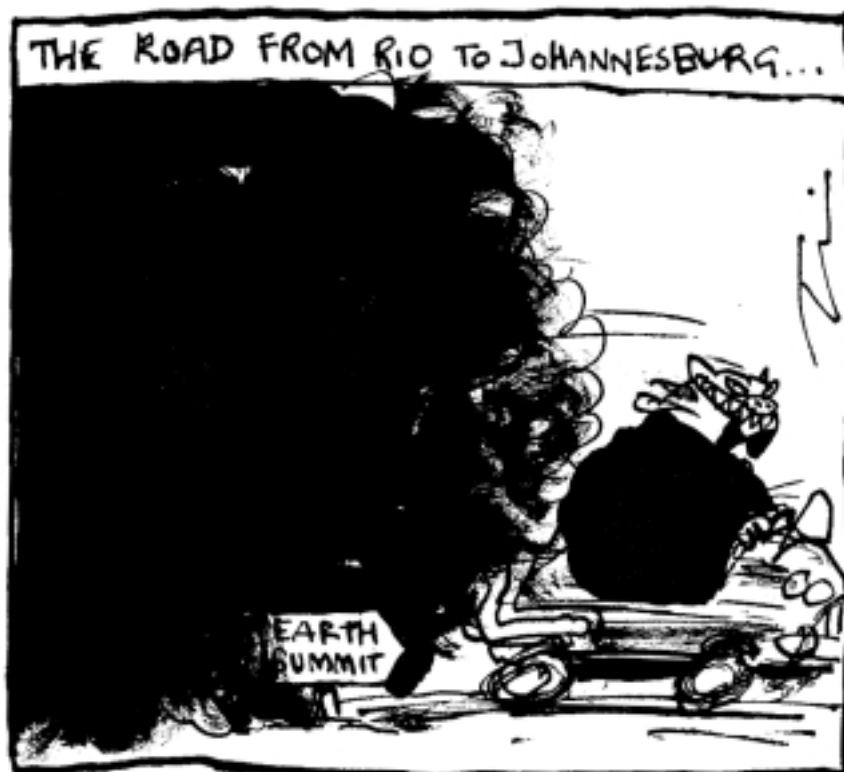
The authorities demanded that he produced legal documents including birth certificates. All had been lost when the family were evicted.

They were in a shelter, but on 4 August they were given a deadline of 5.30pm to produce the documents the following day or be kicked out.

They spent 5 August going from one office to another trying to get duplicate documents.

They could not find them. Jason-Eric’s father says, “Jason panicked. He said, ‘Dad, what we going to do?’”

He found his son surrounded by empty medicine bottles at 4pm.



★ **SWANSEA College bosses are sharp.**

The scissors at the college’s learning centre had a habit of disappearing.

Management decided the only way to stop that was to tie them down to the counter...with a long piece of string.

They are now looking for half a long piece of string with some scissors attached.

Crime record of US torture

REMEMBER how US and British intervention was going to liberate the people of Afghanistan from religious fanaticism?

The press here was full of stories of the activities of the Taliban’s religious police in the Department for the Protection of Virtue and Prevention of Vice.

Now, under the pro-Western government of Hamid Karzai, the depart-

ment is being re-created.

Earlier this year US forces raided two Afghan villages and killed ten policemen belonging to the Karzai government.

Even Western officials in Afghanistan said the US troops “gave the prisoners a thrashing”.

US forces are now leaving the torture to their favoured Afghan thugs.

Journalist Robert Fisk reports, “‘It’s the Afghan Special Forces who beat the Pashtun prisoners for information now—not the Americans,’ a Western military man told me in Kandahar. ‘But the CIA are there during the beatings’.”

Should Afghan torture fail, the US can always use its camp at Guantanamo Bay where 564 prisoners are already held.

The US military has just constructed a bigger camp to detain hundreds more “indefinitely”, away from the prying eyes of TV crews.

THINGS THEY SAY

“THERE IS still some leakage.”

■ DAVID TRIESMAN, the Labour Party’s general secretary, on the party’s loss of membership, down from 400,000 in 1997 to 280,000 in January

“ONE OF the things that we heard today is that our economy has strengths that are greater than the challenges.”

■ GEORGE BUSH, 13 August

“FOR the foreseeable future the risks are weighted mainly toward conditions that may generate economic weakness.”

■ US FEDERAL RESERVE, 13 August

“PEOPLE MAY have been known to splash out this kind of money to see Liza Minnelli on stage, but a live performance by Iain Duncan Smith is a rather different proposition.”

■ TORY PARTY MEMBER on plans to charge £500 to hear the Tory leader

“IT IS a double garage that is being split down the middle. We have received several offers but all below the asking price.”

■ SPOKESPERSON for a man selling half his garage in upmarket Notting Hill in west London for £150,000

“THERE IS real alarm that relations could break down totally if Woodley or Camfield get in. They have to be stopped. Dromey is the least worst option.”

■ SENIOR DOWNING STREET SOURCE on Tony Blair’s fears for the upcoming election in the TGWU union

“WHILE I regret that I, like many others, failed to predict the collapse of the telecommunications sector, I am nevertheless proud of the work I did.”

■ JACK GRUBMAN, Wall Street analyst leaving his firm with a \$32 billion payoff. He was a key figure in helping WorldCom. He is under multiple investigations

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LABOUR'S SHAME OVER REFUGEE FAMILY

Blunkett condemns Ahmadiis to new agony

DAVID BLUNKETT, the home secretary, lied through his teeth to get a refugee family deported at top speed from Britain.

That scandal was revealed last week in a Home Office letter about the Ahmadi family, who fled from Afghanistan to Britain last year.

The letter was a key piece of evidence used in a court hearing on Tuesday of last week.

The court ruled in Blunkett's favour, allowing him to force the Ahmadiis and their children, aged four and six, back to Germany, the first European country they escaped to.

The letter said, "The family are no longer asylum seekers in Germany, having been granted residence there on humanitarian grounds."

"The family will not be settled in a reception centre, as these facilities are for people whose asylum claims are being processed, and not for people in this family's position who have been granted residence in Germany."

"Accordingly, upon their return to Germany the family will have settled right of residence. This means they will be housed within the community."

"As they are lawfully entitled to receive them, they will have full access to the various social and welfare

provisions of the German state."

But the German authorities had turned down an asylum application from the Ahmadiis before they left Britain.

"They will probably be out of Germany within a few months," confirmed Roland Dorfner from the Bavarian Refugee Council this week.

Blunkett and Beverley Hughes, his immigration minister, either knew the German government was going to deport the Ahmadiis or covered up the truth.

Brutal

When the Ahmadiis' solicitor asked in court for time to check the Home Office information the court refused.

But now the family are locked away in a German refugee camp, in fear of the moment they are forced back to war-torn Afghanistan.

But David Blunkett got what he wanted—to show the anti-refugee press and politicians he is brutal towards refugees.

The Home Office chartered a special plane to remove the family from Britain to avoid a repeat of successful protests that have stopped deportations on ordinary flights.

Beverley Hughes admitted the government was using the Ahmadiis' case to set an example.

The Ahmadiis' reason for leaving Germany is shown in psychiatrists' reports on the mother, Feriba, and the two children.

Dr Steve Turner described in his report the fits Feriba has suffered since the Taliban launched a missile attack on her home in Afghanistan. They are similar to post-traumatic stress disorder.

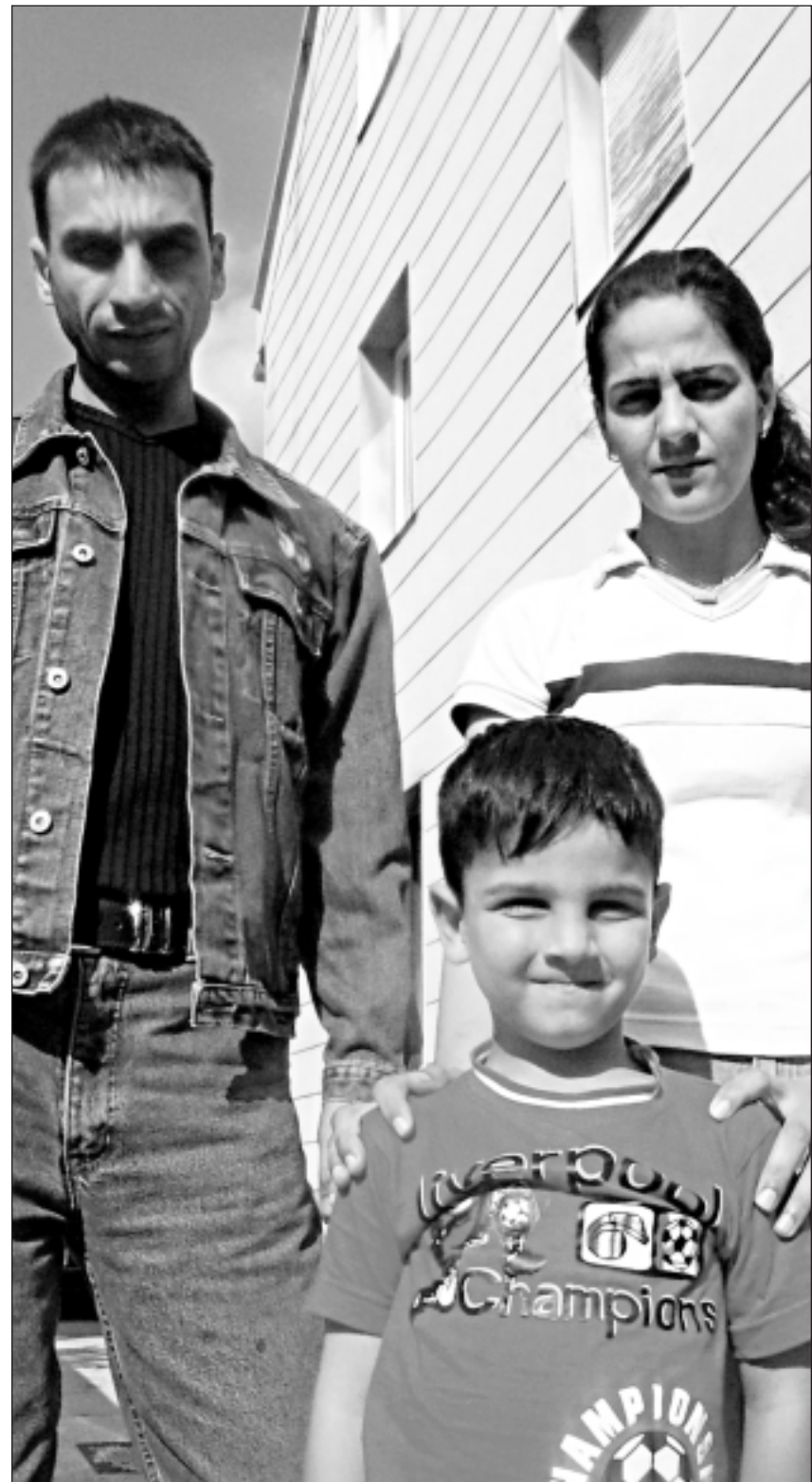
Her husband, Farid, was also imprisoned twice and tortured by the Taliban.

The trauma of the German refugee camp and the racial harassment they experienced there meant Feriba had a bad fit and was in hospital for two days.

"She is physically sick, has a bad headache, has numbness of the left arm, has a sort of pain which radiates from her neck down her back and is then replaced by numbness affecting the back and both legs," said Dr Turner.

When the family were transferred to a second camp, "the pain in her feet and hands started again. It got to the point where she could not stand or walk normally."

Her health improved when they arrived in Dover and joined the community in Lye in the West Midlands. The



THE AHMADI family on a brief trip out of their appalling camp

children went to school and the family made friends.

But the doctor felt if Feriba was wrenched away from there her health would deteriorate.

The Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers says, "It is highly undesirable

that these children continue to be held in detention anywhere."

"Such a move could well be seen as emotional abuse within the meaning of the 1969 Children Act. The mother's own health is clearly also at risk now she has been returned to Germany."

Being forced to live like animals

PRESSURE FORCED the German government to move the Ahmadiis to the Landsberg centre near Munich, which has better facilities. But they were first housed in squalor.

ELANE HEFFERNAN, from the Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers, went to visit them there last weekend. She told *Socialist Worker*:

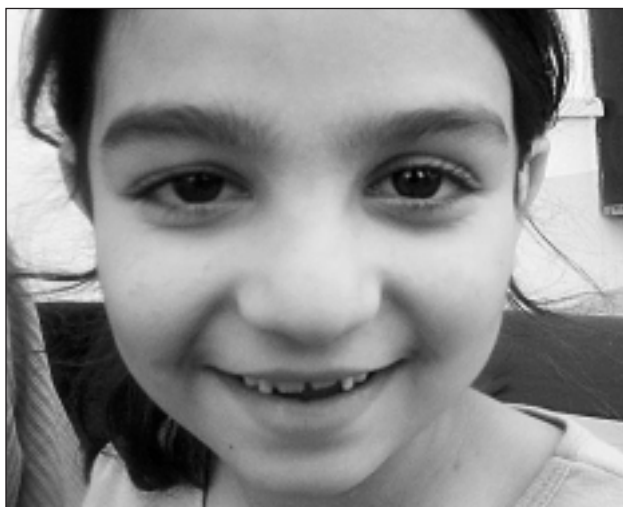
"WHEN THE family were taken away in a van last week to the airport they thought they had refugee status in Germany."

But now they are shocked and stunned.

We went to the reception centre in Munich where the family are staying. It is huge, a warehouse with four or five floors divided into rooms.

The family are in a room ten foot by 20 foot. It is dirty and horrible. It's about making people live like animals. I came away with flea bites from the bed.

There is no lock on the door.



HADIA AHMADI: "I hope they don't kill me"

Opposite them are the toilets with urine all over the floor. It stank so badly it made you physically sick. This is apparently a typical reception centre in Germany.

They have nothing to do all day. They can't leave the environs of Munich town.

The family even got into

trouble because we took them to a park during the day and they weren't back by 8pm.

The children are banned from going to local schools.

The huge kitchen has nothing like chairs and cutlery. There are just four tiny camp stoves with two rings.

People are not supposed to be housed there for long. But another Afghan family we met had been there for five months.

The key thing is that the Ahmadiis are completely isolated from society.

This was pointed out as particularly harmful in the psychiatrists' assessment of the Ahmadiis.

They are frightened now of speaking out because they fear they will get punished.

They were interviewed when they arrived and intimidated about making complaints.

Feriba talks openly of killing herself. I watched her young daughter curl up in a ball on the bed and cry for ages.

There was a fight inside the hostel and they believed one of the people was killed. There was a pool of blood left for ages that the children had to walk through. Feriba's daughter pointed it out to me, saying, "I hope they don't kill me".

IF THE Ahmadiis are forced back to Afghanistan they won't find the safe, stable society that the US and British war was supposed to deliver.

Bush is still sending planes over to bomb people.

The rivalries that the war opened up between different Afghan factions continue to rage.

These had already led to assassinations of various government ministers and their supporters.

Afghanistan's minister for women was forced out of the government for breaking sharia law.

The returning refugees, 1.5 million so far this year, live among piles of timber and concrete beams, and sleep in tents.

Resettlement of the refugees has already cost £141 million. But the key infrastructure

needed to help the returning refugees settle has not been built.

Amnesty International has called on countries to stop sending refugees back there.

"Now is not the time to be encouraging and promoting the return of Afghan refugees," said a spokesperson.

The refugees get just \$100 in transport costs, three sacks of wheat, two plastic floor mats, blankets, soap, and a few food essentials like

sugar and milk to build a new life with.

Seven months after the Western countries pledged to provide billions in aid relief money is already running out.

The UN appealed for £175 million this year. But it is still short of more than £55 million, or 200,000 tonnes of food.

This is the "safe" country New Labour believes families like the Ahmadiis should be dumped back into.

Country still at war

Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers

We urgently need money so that we can carry on the campaign for the Ahmadi family. Can you help?

Send donations to CDAS, Box 4289, London WC1X 3XX. Phone 07941 566 183

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PO Box 82 London E3 3LH

War-torn cry out for relief

UN OFFICIALS with special responsibilities for children in armed conflict report that relief work in Afghanistan is being held up.

The missing relief is adding daily to the misery, suffering and deaths of the children in the war-torn country.

The reports found that one in three children in Afghanistan have lost one or both of their parents.

Half the population is suffering from severe malnutrition.

This has created a situation in which one in five children die before their first birthday.

Up to 350 people, many of them children, are killed or injured by unexploded cluster bombs and land mines each month.

Despite this humanitarian disaster Clare Short's Department for International Development has not distributed the aid which it had allocated.

The Department for International Development admits that £200 million has been allocated and only £14 million has so far been distributed.

□DEREK HANLIN, Mid Glamorgan

Short changed on euro debate

IN *Socialist Worker* (10 August) there is a letter declaring war on the euro.

I suggest that the comrades are victims of the run-around over the euro and are both greatly mistaken over the facts.

They imply that if Britain joined the euro there would be huge cuts and privatisation of public services, the welfare state and especially pensions.

But Britain has almost the worst record on these things in the European Union, both in and out of the euro zone.

We should recognise that Britain is the most privatised country in the EU and already has 90 percent of the "flexible" casual jobs in the EU.

This is not a plea for a pro-euro campaign but one to look at the facts.

The euro debate is a put-up job to distract workers from a struggle over the things that really matter, like jobs, pensions, privatisation, and rights for trade unions and workers.

□HUGH LOWE, West London

It's a whole different world

LAST WEEK a reader asked if society could be run in a different way to capitalism.

Sometimes it is hard to believe that large numbers of people would be prepared to share resources.

Capitalism is based on competition. It's easy to look around and see everyone being competitive.

But there are many other human qualities like logic, fear, superstition, love, laziness, grief and need.

People's ideas and aspirations can change.

Before capitalism we had feudalism. In this society everything was controlled by the aristocracy's god-given right to rule. But people in 17th century England rebelled against such ideas.

Today technology gives us overproduction. But competition demands that only those with money receive it.

Computers update citizens' bank accounts every day. Imagine if the same resources and technology updated people's needs instead—competing would be superfluous.

I believe most people would prefer this state of affairs. It is not a utopia but something people should have the confidence to fight for.

□SIMON BRAMWELL, Liverpool

High street chain shackles its staff in Scottish stores



Picture: JESS HURD

SCHOOL STUDENTS at Kingsland are determined to defend their education

Cutbacks let down the class

PARENTS AND teachers in Hackney have argued for years for a new comprehensive school in Hackney.

Instead we were greeted this week with the news in our local paper that 150 local school children have no secondary school places.

The reality of New Labour's education policy in one of the poorest boroughs in Britain is to short-change some of the most deprived vulnerable children.

What is Hackney doing about this? Firstly, it is introducing a new city academy in 2004.

While we should welcome a new school, it is clear that Estelle Morris's "post-comprehensive" schools, including city academies, are creating a two-tier system.

Some schools will be better funded than others, and allowed to select their students. This will be a disaster for children in Hackney.

Privilege

Unbelievably, Hackney wants to close Kingsland school though, as it admits, it doesn't have spare places for the students at that school to go to.

I had the privilege of attending

a meeting about the closure last month.

I witnessed some 80 parents, teachers and students defend their school, and expose the bureaucrats' arguments.

Parents, teachers and students pledged to fight to keep the school open. We should be defending mixed local comprehensives.

One person I am confident will be giving his support is Paul Foot, who is standing as Socialist Alliance candidate for mayor in Hackney!

□JANE BASSETT, vice-president Hackney NUT (personal capacity)

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postal points

■I WAS appalled to see that the BBC have allowed Andrew Neil, a right wing union bashing multi-millionaire, to present *Newsnight* on BBC2.

□DAVE TAYLOR, Hampshire

■I AM not often a *Socialist Worker* reader. I prefer the *Times*.

However, I read news of Scott Ritter's speech in the houses of parliament last July in *Socialist Worker*.

It seems to have been a good speech. But didn't Scott Ritter mention oil?

The US seems about to precipitate what it most fears, which is general loss of access to oil in the Middle East region.

□LAWRENCE THOMPSON, Caithness

Blunkett echoes Thatcher

I ATTENDED a conference last month where David Blunkett was a guest speaker.

The conference was about the delivery of "citizenship" in schools and sixth form colleges.

Blunkett's words were the kind of racist, right wing rhetoric that makes me sick.

He began by arguing that a citizenship curriculum should not help young people understand their rights. It should teach them their responsibilities as a "good British citizen". He then rounded on

asylum seekers.

Blunkett claimed his proposed citizenship test for people entering the country was a way of ensuring they "really want to be British citizens and don't just want our excellent state benefits".

When a teacher from Dover challenged him, Blunkett replied that people who make racist remarks about asylum seekers "have got a point".

To our amazement he went on to blame asylum seekers for racism by saying, "These people try to cheat the system. That

WE HEAR so much about "flexible" working, but what does it really mean?

A case in Scotland exposes what it's about.

Five workers for the high street chain Argos have been sacked for refusing to work Sundays.

Their bosses think they can get away with treating workers as if they are a "soft touch".

The nationwide store has ruthlessly exploited a legal loophole.

Rules that prevent bosses sacking workers for refusing to work Sundays in England, Wales and Northern Ireland do not apply in Scotland.

Last month the Argos chain announced that all its 1,300 employees in Scotland would have to sign new contracts that impose Sunday working.

But five workers—four from Aberdeen and one from Edinburgh—refused to sign up to the new agreements.

Argos bosses showed no "flexibility" towards the staff or their family responsibilities and religious objections.

□MAGGIE SAVAGE, Edinburgh

LOWDOWN ON PAY

IT IS good the TUC campaign for better pay by calling for a national minimum wage of £5.30.

One third of British workers take home less than the European "decency" threshold for earnings.

Blair supporters like Polly Toynbee, who writes in the *Guardian*, argue that local authority workers escape absolute poverty.

Council domestics and manuals in my TGWU branch can only do this by doing more than one job.

They live in the worst accommodation in the area and forgo many things.

Some four million UK children are too poor to get three meals a day or a decent pair of shoes.

What a difference it would make if their parents were paid what they deserve.

The pay deal being offered to low-paid council workers is not good enough.

Vital groups of workers, like refuse collectors, cleaners and classroom assistants earn less than £13,000 and will see little benefit from the deal.

An hourly rate of just over £5 is poverty pay.

When millions are prepared to strike, with public support, why do union leaders refuse to fight all the way?

We need an all-out fight against low pay with council workers at its head. A person who is half poor is still poor.

□BEN DICKENSON, East London

causes racism."

Everyone that I spoke to had been appalled by Blunkett's speech.

The teacher from Dover said Blunkett reminded him of Thatcher in 1979 and said it was no wonder the BNP could get a hearing if Labour peddles racist rubbish.

Blunkett requested that journalists were not present during his speech which he wanted kept under wraps. We felt that everyone should know what he really thinks.

□ANN JENKINS, East London

LOW PAID HOSPITAL WORKERS CELEBRATE VICTORY

'We beat giants of privatisation'

HUNDREDS OF health workers packed into a social club in the East End of Glasgow last Friday evening.

The celebration had been organised to mark a stunning victory.

Over 300 health workers at the city's Glasgow Royal Infirmary took on the multinational firm Sodexho, which runs support services at the hospital, and won.

The workers—porters, domestics, catering and security staff—struck for five days in all, and were ready to go all out.

They mounted effective pickets, defying the firm's attempt to organise scabbing.

They have achieved significant pay rises, proper sick and holiday pay, and an agreement that they will eventually be brought up to NHS pay and conditions.

Just as importantly, they have built the union. They have established a fighting spirit which can lay the basis for future battles.

Socialist Worker spoke to some of the strikers at last week's celebration.

Tracie Comrie is a shop steward for the domestics in the hospital.

'I'VE WORKED there for three years but only became a steward six months ago. I'd never been on strike or anything before.

Our claim was not really for very much. We're still low paid even after we've won. But we did win and it was really exciting.

I remember the feeling the first day on strike. It

'Sodexho is a big multinational and we beat them'

was raining, torrential rain, but we all stood there, together.

I did things I've never thought I would. There was a rally and I spoke in the City Halls in front of 350 people.

If you'd told me a year ago that I'd do that I'd have said, 'No way,' or needed a bottle of gin before I'd get up there!

I was really nerve-racked, and my heart was thumping.

But I got up and spoke and everyone was cheering. I felt quite proud afterwards.

We recruited people to the union because of the fight. We went from 20 members to over 300.

I went round just speaking to people, and explained what the claim was and why we had to fight. People had all sorts of worries, about losing money if they went on strike, but when you talked to people you convinced them.

It's different going to work now. It sounds strange, but everyone's happier going in there.

It's a big multinational, and we beat them. That's what everyone should learn from our fight.'



WORKERS PICKETED all entrances to the hospital and defied Sodexho's attempts to organise scabbing

'When you fight you can organise union'



CAROLYN LECKIE is the secretary of the strikers' Unison union branch. She is also a leading member of the Scottish Socialist Party. **'THIS FIGHT** has just been a brilliant experience. The vast majority of the workers are new to the union and all of the shop stewards are new.

It shows that you don't organise the union and then fight. When you fight it's then that you can organise people.

It's been fantastic how people have been changed by it. People have more confidence,

more respect.

The key in the strike was involving everybody. We had pickets 24 hours a day on all the many entrances. And I mean pickets. In fact sometimes it was like a blockade.

We set the agenda, putting in our claim. You don't have to wait and just react to management's agenda.

We're certainly not complacent. There is still a lot of work to do—and more fights will be needed.

But this has been a good victory and given people the confidence and strength to win more.'

A lesson for future battles

SODEXHO IS one of the giant firms which the Tories and now New Labour have helped to take over public services.

It has contracts in schools, colleges and hospitals all across Britain.

It also ran the infamous refugee voucher scheme and runs the Harmondsworth refugee detention centre.

Sodexho is not just a giant in Britain. The multinational bids for contracts anywhere and everywhere in the world.

It runs services in countries from Australia to Venezuela. In

the US, for example, it runs contracts for school meals.

The Glasgow victory shows how ordinary workers can take on and humble this kind of giant firm.

Rolling

It is also a lesson for all those public sector workers who have been privatised.

Of course, people have fought and should fight to stop privatisation. But the Glasgow victory shows that even where privatisation has been pushed

through the fight is far from over.

Workers can target firms and particular services, organise and fight—and win.

That can then lay the basis for future battles to begin rolling back privatisation and drive the profiteers out of public services.

Unions should learn from Glasgow.

They should be drawing up target lists and begin taking the battle to the privateers and the politicians who allow them to operate.

'People are now more confident'

MARGARET Keenan has worked as a domestic in the hospital for six years and joined the union in the run-up to the dispute.

'I JOINED the union because I didn't really realise before how badly people were being treated. Things were just going from bad to worse, so we had to do something.

We decided to strike because we weren't getting anywhere with talking. For nearly everybody here it was their first time on strike.

To tell you the truth, it was really exciting. We had good pickets, great meetings and rallies, and we all stuck together.

There is a different spirit now. People are much more confident in themselves and in each other.

It was great how much support we got from people outside the hospital. When you told people what we got paid they couldn't believe it.

It was really well organised. We had three shifts on the picket line like when you're at work, and nearly everybody did their bit.



MARGARET KEENAN

We were definitely prepared to go all out if that's what it would take. The company knew we were really determined and that's why we won.

Maybe we can get Sodexho out now and get back into the NHS, which is where we should be in the first place. They shouldn't be playing for profit with people's lives.'

'If we can do it so can anyone'

'IT'S A marvellous victory," said Jim Clark, chair of the workers' Unison union branch.

"People were on just £4.20 an hour, with no proper sick pay and holidays. Now they will all be on more than £5 an hour, and have much better sick pay and holidays, better overtime, and soon be brought back onto full NHS pay and conditions."

Finlay Kennedy, a shop steward at the hospital, explained, "We are all low paid workers. Sodexho has been there for about 12 years under different names. They are a low pay company—they treat people like rubbish."

"The feeling has been building up for a while. Then about six to eight months ago we formed a stewards committee and got organised."

"When we saw scabs being brought in to do our jobs that just made people more angry and determined."

"There was a feeling growing that we should go on all-out strike. I think the company sensed that and

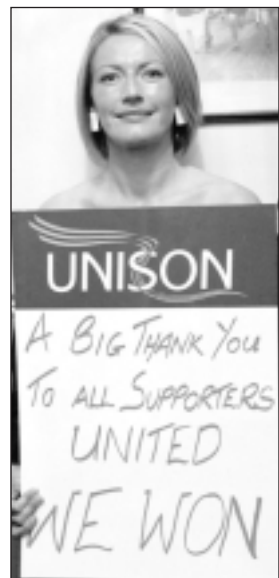


JIM CLARK

that's part of the reason they backed down.

"When you get people treated like dirt they are going to kick back at some point."

"If 300 people in Glasgow can take on and beat a multinational like this then anybody anywhere can do it, and if they do we'll be right there supporting them."



TRACIE COMRIE

what socialists say

A council of war, not peace

SOME PEOPLE who are horrified by the prospect of an attack on Iraq are looking to the United Nations (UN) to stop the slaughter.

CHARLIE KIMBER explains why the United Nations won't stop Bush

So one of several parliamentary motions critical of British foreign policy says military action against Iraq "can only be morally justified if it carries a new and specific mandate from the United National Security Council".

It is tempting to look to anything that might rein back Bush's murderous plans.

But it is very dangerous to say that war on Iraq is wrong "unless endorsed by the UN".

The US can normally pressure, cajole and bully other countries into supporting the decisions it wants from the UN.

It used debt write-off, threats and promises to get backing for the 1991 Gulf War. It was able to bring its allies into line over bombing in Bosnia and Kosovo.

In neither case did China or Russia use their veto powers.

There are 15 members of the Security Council, the key UN body. Five of them are permanent (Russia, China, France, Britain and the US) and there are ten others which serve for a temporary period.

Russia needs the backing of the US to get investment from multinationals and financial help from bankers. And Russia wants the US to help it secure full membership of the World Trade Organisation.

Without Russian opposition, France will not want to use its veto. China has a consistent policy of abstention.

As leading strategic analyst Dan Plesch pointed out in the *Guardian* last week, "Some of the non-permanent members of the Security Council will be keen to help the US."

Bulgaria wants to join NATO. Colombia depends on the US government for

arms, money and political support in its civil war. Norway has a conservative government and wants to be sure that the US will stand by it in any clashes with its neighbour Russia. Mexico and Ireland have strong economic ties with the US-based multinationals.

This leaves Syria, Cameroon, Guinea and Singapore. The US will therefore be able to find a majority of positive votes with a few abstentions.

Indeed, the US may be able to get a majority of the 15 Security Council members just by dragging the weak temporary members into line.

Weak

The problems with the UN do not lie just with the composition of the Security Council at any one time.

The UN was set up by the great powers in the wake of the Second World War as an instrument of their will.

It was used to sanction the carve-up after the war where the victors marked out their control of the countries they had "liberated".

The UN first partitioned Palestine, dispossessing the Palestinians and creating the state of Israel.

Then the UN assisted imperialist forces murder the nationalist Patrice Lumumba, the elected leader of the Congo.

When the Cold War ended there were high hopes that the UN could play a peacekeeping role in the New World Order.

Yet the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq was sanctioned by the UN.

Even the UN's "peace-keeping" operations have ended in disaster, as the 1992 intervention in Somalia shows.

At the centre of the UN stand the most powerful,

most violent, most heavily armed states. They do not become any nicer just because they are together in a room rather than separate.

The "Big Five" permanent members of the UN Security Council have been allowed to get away with brutality on a breathtaking scale.

The US government has the bloodiest hands.

It carried out the carpet bombing of Vietnam and Cambodia, helped remove the elected regime in Chile, backed terror groups in Nicaragua, Mozambique and Angola, invaded Grenada and Panama, bombed Libya and Iraq and supported murderous governments in Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti and many other countries.

France has been allowed to conduct colonial wars in Algeria, and Vietnam, and to blow up the Greenpeace boat *Rainbow Warrior*.

The USSR was permitted to invade Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan and Chechnya, which included razing the city of Grozny in a war that has seen around 50,000 people killed.

China's rulers ordered the massacre of protesters who filled Tiananmen Square in 1989. The regime also routinely jails dissidents, uses torture and bans all opposition.

These big powers work through the UN when it suits them, and outside when it does not.

As John Bolton, presently the US undersecretary of state for arms control and international security, says, "There is no United Nations. There is an international community that occasionally can be led by the only real power in the world and that is the United States."

When big powers act outside the UN, the UN is powerless to stop them. The Israeli government brushes aside UN resolutions because it rests on US power.

We cannot rely on the UN to stop war.

But we can make sure everyone who is against the war, including those who look to the UN, are on the anti-war demo on 28 September.

Made in Britain and US

How they have 'changed' every regime in Iraq

"REGIME CHANGE" in Iraq is the cry from George Bush and the warmongers. Western powers, particularly Britain, have been changing regimes in Iraq since its creation — with disastrous consequences for its people. HELEN SHOOTER explains.

How Britain created Iraq

BRITAIN SET up Iraq in 1922. The area had been three separate provinces — Basra, Baghdad and Mosul — which were part of the Ottoman Empire run from Turkey.

Britain's rulers wanted the territory after oil reserves were discovered there in the late 19th century.

The Anglo-Persian oil company had drilling rights across 500,000 square miles in the region.

Britain seized its chance during the First World War to occupy Basra and Baghdad. The allied powers defeated Turkey alongside Germany.

As Lord Curzon, the British foreign secretary, said, "The allies floated to victory on a wave of oil."

He said he wanted the Persian Gulf to become a "British lake".

Britain and France had drawn up a secret deal in 1916, the Sykes-Picot Treaty, where they agreed to divide the Arab territories among themselves.

The Bolshevik revolutionary government in Russia revealed it in 1917.

It showed that Britain and France had no intention of granting the Arabs' hope for independence.

This was despite the call Britain had made during the war for the Arabs to revolt against the Turks. The Arab revolt and the promises made by Britain's rulers are shown in the film *Lawrence of Arabia*.

The British military moved quickly to subdue Iraq.

The RAF bombed Kurdish areas in northern Iraq in 1919 and 1920 where there were uprisings against British rule.

Arthur "Bomber" Harris said, "The Arab and the Kurd now know what real bombing means in casualties and damage."

"Within 45 minutes a full-size village can be practically wiped out and a third of its inhabitants killed or injured."

Winston Churchill, secretary of state for war, said, "I am strongly in favour of using poisonous gas against uncivilised tribes."

The League of Nations, the forerunner to the United Nations, allowed Britain and France to carve the Middle East up.

Britain got a mandate to run Iraq (now made up of all three provinces) and Palestine in 1920.

It drew up the borders creating Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in 1922. The main aim in creating Kuwait was to prevent the new Iraq from having access to the Gulf — this could have allowed it to threaten British dominance.

Britain then manoeuvred to install a ruler in Iraq who it could rely on.

A Foreign Office official said, "What is wanted is a king who will be content to reign but not govern."

The new Middle East department of the Colonial Office, headed by Winston Churchill, decided to install Emir Faisal ibn Hussain as king of Iraq.

Faisal had not set foot in Iraq before he was made king in 1921.

British administrators ensured laws were passed to favour the ruling class of large landowners who came from the minority Sunni population. They rigged elections to the puppet parliament.

Britain and the US formed the Iraqi Petroleum Company, which got the right to drill in every part of the old Ottoman Empire in 1928.

Britain's legacy

KING FAISAL was under constant pressure from ordinary people, who hated British rule.

Britain finally granted Iraq independence in 1932 after a wave of strikes and protests the previous year.

The British High Commission admitted the situation "reveals surprising lack of support for the present government, and unpopularity of King Faisal. Republican cries have been openly raised in the streets."

But Britain retained a stranglehold on power in Iraq, keeping control over oil and maintaining

air bases.

Even most of Iraq's upper classes were excluded from power.

There were repeated coup attempts. Each faction that seized power used the British-equipped and British-trained army to crush opposition.

Iraq's rulers were prepared to use that force against workers and to defend British oil interests. Some 5,000 workers went on strike in the Iraqi Petroleum Company for higher wages.

The strike united workers across ethnic and religious lines. The government sent in mounted police who killed ten workers at a mass meeting.

After the Second World War Britain withdrew its troops, deciding to rely on puppet rulers to defend its oil interests.

Popular unrest and strikes grew throughout the country as the gap between rich and poor widened. The cost of living increased fivefold between 1939 and 1957. Some 80 percent of the population were illiterate in 1958.

The pro-British monarchy in Iraq was a bulwark against radical change in the Middle East.

It was at the centre of opposing the radical movement of Gamal Abdul Nasser, which overthrew the British-backed monarchy in Egypt in 1952 and which preached

radical change uniting all Arabs against imperialism.

The Baghdad Pact in 1953 was a NATO-sponsored agreement among states in the region, led by Iraq, to contain Nasserism.

The rulers of Britain and France were thrown into panic when they failed to stop Nasser nationalising the Suez Canal in 1956.

The "Suez crisis" provoked a wave of anti-British agitation throughout the region. The Iraqi monarchy fell in 1958 to a military revolt led by Abdul Karim Qasim.

Qasim made popular promises of land reform and negotiations for a greater share of the oil wealth.

Britain sent troops to neighbouring Jordan. The US sent troops to Lebanon.

They were desperate to crush the Qasim government and turned to the Ba'athist Party (which Saddam Hussein now leads) to spearhead right wing resistance in Iraq.

The CIA backed a Ba'athist coup in 1963. The head of the CIA in the Middle East, James Critchfield, said, "We regarded it as a great victory."

How the US and Britain backed Saddam

SADDAM HUSSEIN first gained notoriety when he attempted to assassinate Qasim in 1959.

After the Ba'ath Party seized power from Qasim their national guard attacked working class areas and murdered thousands of Communists and trade union militants.

Although the Ba'ath Party was booted out by its former allies in the military after just six months, it seized power again in 1968.

Western oil companies offered their cooperation to the new rulers.

The Ba'athist regime posed as anti-imperialist, but it did not champion the cause of the Palestinians. In

1970 King Hussein of Jordan launched his Black September assault on Palestinians in his country.

There were 15,000 Iraqi troops in Jordan.

They did nothing to help the Palestinians who were butchered.

The Iraqi regime courted support from both superpowers. In the early 1970s the US relied on Israel, Saudi Arabia and the pro-Western Shah of Iran as its principal allies in the Middle East.

The Shah, with US backing, armed Kurdish rebels in Iraq, while putting down his own Kurdish population.

Iraq and Iran signed a treaty in 1975. Saddam Hussein put down the Kurdish insurgency without a murmur from the West, and consolidated power in 1978.

The US swung firmly behind him when the Shah was overthrown in 1979.

Saddam Hussein went to war with Iran in 1980, with Western support.

The US was terrified by the Iranian Revolution. The bloody eight-year war saw Saddam use poison gas against Iranian troops and Kurdish civilians. There was no outcry from Western governments.

At the end of the war John Kelly, the US assistant secretary of state, visited Baghdad to tell Saddam Hussein, "You are a force for moderation in the region, and the US wants to broaden her relationship with Iraq."

Saddam was so confident of support from the US that he believed he had its agreement to invade Kuwait in 1990.

But that risked upsetting Western interests in the Middle East. So the US turned against him.

The US and Britain have helped create every oppressive regime in Iraq and orchestrated the removal of the one government that had some popularity. We should not let them interfere today.

INJUSTICE CASE

Robert Brown a 'forgotten man'

ROBERT BROWN has spent 25 years in a British jail for a crime he insists he did not commit.

The 45 year old Scot is Britain's longest serving prisoner who is now known to be a victim of a miscarriage of justice.

His case was finally referred to the court of appeal this summer, but he was denied bail by Judge Roderick-Evans and it could be a year before his new hearing.

Brown should have been released a decade ago. His "tariff", the maximum time inside recommended by the trial judge, was 15 years.

Under Britain's scandalous parole rules he is still inside because he refuses to admit his guilt.

Brown was sentenced for the murder of a 56 year old woman in Manchester in 1977.

The case bears all the hallmarks of so many other miscarriages of justice.

He shared a cell in Wormwood Scrubs jail for a time with Paul Hill. Paul was one of the Guildford Four, young Irish men wrongly jailed for bombings in the 1970s and who were finally freed after serving 15 years.

"Brown is really and truly the 'forgotten man' of the British judicial system and police malpractice in the 70s," Paul told journalist Eamonn O'Neill, who has campaigned over the Robert Brown case.

"Everyone knew that this man was innocent. It was a given," says Paul. "The prisoners, the staff, the governors and the visitors they all knew he'd been fitted up."

Yet he is still in jail, refused bail even on the compassionate grounds that his mother is seriously ill and may not live to see her son freed.

Listen

The story has chilling echoes with false "confessions" which saw the Guildford Four jailed, and those in other high profile miscarriages of justice from the 1970s such as the Birmingham Six and Bridgewater Four.

Paddy Hill was one of the Birmingham Six, Irish men who spent 16 years in jail for 1974 bombings they had nothing to do with.

Hill helped launch the Miscarriages of Justice Organisation (MOJO) on his release, and the organisation is now campaigning for the release of Robert Brown.

The judge at Brown's trial in 1977 said that "to believe in Brown's innocence, you have to believe that police officers of all ranks fabricated evidence against him."

Brown shouted "I am innocent" as he was taken away.

He has maintained his innocence every day since.

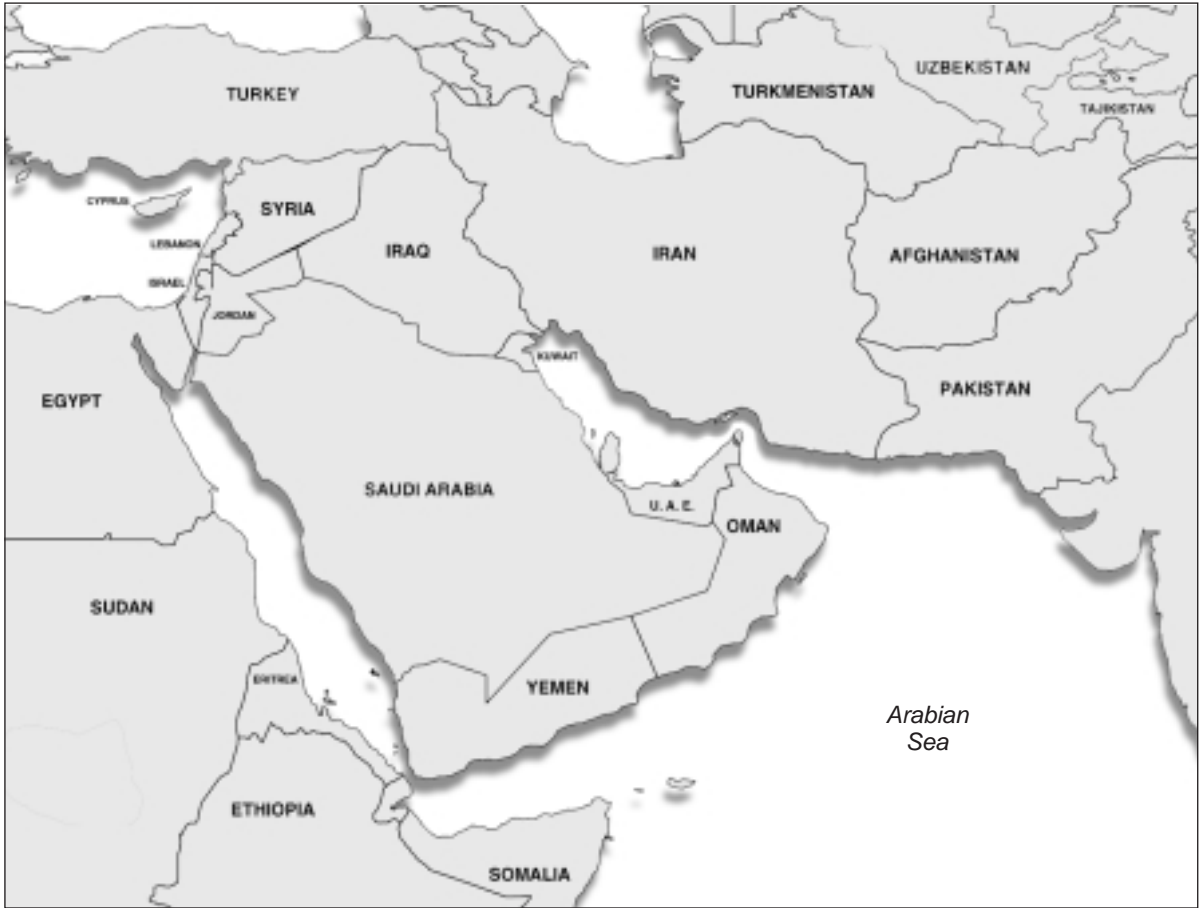
"I did not kill Annie Walsh," he says. "I know nothing about the death of Annie Walsh. I have been saying that to everybody who would listen for 25 years."

The Miscarriages of Justice Organisation is calling on home secretary David Blunkett to intervene and free Robert Brown immediately. Everyone should support that fight.

■ **More information and petitions from Miscarriages of Justice Organisation (Scotland), Glasgow MAC, 34 Albion Street, Glasgow G1 1LL. Phone 0141 564 1245.**

■ **Write to Robert Brown 895839, HMP Wymott, Moss Lane, Ulnes, Walton, Lancashire PR26 8LW.**

by PAUL McGARR



Why socialists say No to bosses' Europe

WHAT SHOULD socialists say about the European Union (EU) and the euro?

It will be a hot issue if, as seems possible, New Labour calls a referendum before the next general election.

Europe helped to tear apart the Tory party. It is causing growing tension inside the Labour Party.

But there are many more important reasons to take up the debate.

That's why the Socialist Alliance will hold a conference on 12 October to discuss the issue.

The question is often posed as whether WE should go into Europe, or whether WE should use the euro.

But WE are not the focus of the debate. The question of Europe has always been about a row between capitalists about how best to screw the working class. Some think it's best to act as a bloc of countries. Others think it's best to operate in a different way.

The majority of business in Europe thinks it is helpful to have a large market with one set of rules.

The growth of EU institutions also helps European business to compete more effectively against the US and Japanese economies.

The juicy prospect of a single market of 500 million people (after the planned expansion in 2004) is enough to convince the overwhelming majority of businessmen that the European Union is a good thing.

The exception is Britain, where the ruling class is much more split. More businesses are for the euro than against it, but many are undecided and a significant section want closer ties with the US rather than Europe.

The anti-euro faction contains several important media bosses (like Rupert Murdoch with his *Sun* and *Times*) so the anti-euro voice is loudly heard.

Other anti-euro voices belong

to hated right wing figures like Margaret Thatcher and Norman Tebbit—that alone makes many socialists sympathetic to the European project.

And there is a great myth, pushed by trade union leaders like John Monks of the TUC, that the European Union is pro-worker.

The TUC was converted to this view in 1988 when Jacques Delors, the president of the European Commission, told them to drop their anti-EU attitudes and get involved in its “social dimension”.

The unions had suffered big defeats, so Delors' message was lapped up—it seemed much easier than actually fighting the employers and the Tories.

BUT THERE are very good reasons for workers to be wholly against the European project.

The European economic model is a Thatcherite, neo-liberal society with increased flexibility of labour, a sharply restricted welfare state, open markets and stripped down regulation of business.

As a recent Unison union pamphlet says, “Public services are not only under threat from the PFI and PPPs. They are also threatened by membership of the euro.

“The strict budgetary limits imposed by the Growth and Stability Pact means that if Britain joined the euro, we would be forced to cut public spending by £10 billion.

“The independent ‘think-tank’, the National Institute for Economic and Social Research, is even more pessimistic and believes that the cuts could be as much as £22 billion.”

Euro rules restrict what governments can do.

They say that government deficits (spending minus tax receipts) must not exceed 3 percent of gross domestic product and

governments should balance their budgets by around 2004.

This is all designed to insulate governments from public pressure.

The right wing Portuguese government says its budget deficit is well above the 3 percent ceiling. So ministers are planning “structural reform in sectors such as health, education and social security.”

Portugal is a relatively small economy. But the French, Italian and German governments are also about to fall foul of the spending limits, leading to potentially ferocious assaults on the working class.

Incredibly the EU has even raised doubts about some of the spending plans put forward by New Labour on the grounds that they may be too lavish!

The European project is also linked to racism. “Fortress Europe” is about constructing a barbed wire fence of regulations at the borders of the EU backed up with gunboats, prisons and officially sanctioned scapegoating and harassment of black and Asian people.

The Schengen agreement, signed in 1985, abolished some internal travel restrictions inside the EU. But it immensely strengthened the barriers to people getting inside the “fortress”.

Finally, European institutions are linked to the prospect of growing militarism. Several countries are pushing for a European army to intervene where national governments might fear to tread.

Spending cuts, privatisation, racism and militarism do not spring solely from the EU. National governments push them on their own or in alliance with the US.

But the EU codifies a distinctly right wing view of the world. It also provides an alibi for any government that wants to push through cuts.

EUROPEAN institutions have never delivered substantial reforms for workers.

Policies are shaped by bodies like the European Round Table of Industrialists which links the leaders of all Europe's biggest firms.

And institutions which are not formally part of the European Union, like the European Court of Human Rights, reflect the same values.

For example, two years ago ex-King Constantine of Greece won his confiscated palaces back from the Greek government.

The European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg ruled that his “right to enjoy peaceful possession of his property” had been violated.

In much of Europe the health service and pensions are better than in Britain. That is not because of the EU—it is because workers fought hard for them, much harder than the British union leaders have done.

Many socialists will see that the



FOR A workers' not a bosses' Europe: Nice, December 2000

Pictures: JESS HURD

EU is really about helping capital.

But the great fear is that any campaign against the euro will inevitably end up with the left trailing behind “Little Englander” racist Tories to save the pound.

It is claimed that we will soon be intertwining the red flag with the St George's Cross.

Some sections of the left will, to their shame, be prepared to share platforms with “anyone against Europe”, however right wing they are.

But abstaining from the euro issue will not inoculate the working class from the threat of being pulled by the right.

If the Tories and their allies are seen to be the only people focusing the justified anger about the European project then it is highly likely that some good people will feel forced to march alongside them.

But we can have a left wing campaign against the bosses' Europe that is independent of the Tories and other right wingers.

The basis for it is the tremendous strikes and protests by workers and anti-capitalists during the last ten years.

There is a common theme to events such as the strikes in France against the Juppé plan in 1995, the demonstrations at the EU summits in Amsterdam, Nice, Barcelona,

Gothenburg, Barcelona and Seville, the general strikes across most of Europe in defence of pensions and many other events.

That theme is “for a social Europe not a bosses' Europe” and, more recently, “against a Europe of capital and war”.

THOSE WHO support the European bosses' project are pitting themselves against these protesting workers.

Those who abstain on Europe are showing their pessimism about the anti-capitalist movement and about workers' opposition to the European bosses.

We are against the euro because we believe that “another world is possible” and we want to use the euro referendum to push that message.

Chancellor Gordon Brown has his “five tests” for when it might be right for Britain to adopt the euro.

Here are my five tests for a successful, independent campaign against the European project. The campaign must be:

●Internationalist: ideally at every major rally of the campaign we would have a French, Spanish or German worker to demonstrate

our support for European unity of working class struggle.

The campaign should also stress that our concerns do not stop at the borders of the EU or of Europe.

●Anti-imperialist: we are against the bullying military and economic power of the US and of the European Union.

●Anti-capitalist: the campaign should draw its inspiration from the events in Seattle in 1999, Genoa last year, Barcelona and Seville this year.

●For workers' rights: instead of the spurious rights offered by the European institutions, we are for genuine trade union and workers' freedoms.

●For the rights of refugees and immigrants. We are against Fortress Europe and for tearing down all the racist immigration laws, whether drawn up by the EU or national governments.

Workers will have to fight whether we are paid in pounds or euros, against both the EU and our own government.

We should oppose the European project as part of confronting the bosses' agenda.

■To find out more about the Socialist Alliance conference on Europe go to www.socialistalliance.net or phone 020 7791 3138.



CAR WORKERS' international fight for jobs

by CHARLIE KIMBER

in my view

The drama of conflict

MANY HAVE feared that the Edinburgh Festival Fringe has lost something of its cutting edge as it has grown ever larger.

Yet, as this year's festival approached, we began hearing concerns about the number of shows with 11 September related themes.

Most of the criticism was directed at the idea that comedians would make jokes about 9-11.

But theatre productions such as the play *The Guys*, starring US movie actors Susan Sarandon and Tim Robbins, also came in for criticism.

The two spoke out against attacking Iraq at a press conference at the festival last week.

Robbins directed the excellent film *Cradle Will Rock*, and Sarandon gave the commentary on the film about the anti-capitalist protest at Seattle, *This is What Democracy Looks Like*.

The arts have stood accused of "cashing in" on 11 September.

However, as Robbins has pointed out, there are plenty of other industries that have tried to profit from the attacks.

US capitalism has cynically created a niche market in patriotic consumerism.

What we have seen in Edinburgh's theatres, however, has been a genuine attempt by artists to come to terms with the impact of 9-11.

Sarandon and Robbins's play, written by New York-based journalist Anne Nelson, is based upon Nelson's own experience. She was approached by a New York fire captain to help him write eulogies to fellow firefighters who died in the Twin Towers.

Movie-star cast

The result is an emotive drama about loss and the need for collective grief.

Written soon after the events, the piece never really deals with the wider political issues which gave rise to the attacks.

In a very brief moment the journalist character talks about meeting an Argentinian woman whose son had been "disappeared" by the US-backed junta. The woman had celebrated 9-11 as a blow against "American imperialists".

Unfortunately that consideration of the US's role in the world is too short-lived.

The play, which also has weaknesses in the writing and structure, is nevertheless a touching piece of theatre about the immense sacrifice of New York's firefighters.

A feature film is being made with Sigourney Weaver and Anthony LaPaglia.

It was inevitable that *The Guys*, with its movie-star cast, would generate the most interest of all the 9-11 related plays in Edinburgh.

But there have been other pieces which have treated the subject with greater artistic and political insight.

The exciting young US company The Riot Group, who astonished theatre-goers three years ago with their satire of US society *Wreck the Airline Barrier*, returned with a brilliant play called *Victory at the Dirt Palace*.

The "dirt palace" of the title is the US TV news industry, and the piece follows the contest for ratings on 9-11 between rival news anchors James Mann and his daughter Kay.

It is brilliantly written, politically intelligent and acted with the sort of force the company's name suggests.

Equally fascinating is Steven Berkoff's performance poem *Requiem for Ground Zero*.

Acted in the powerfully stylised fashion which has become his trademark, the piece shifts between the actor/poet's imaginings of the hijackings and attacks on the World Trade Centre and his consideration of the US and British response.

Theatre of this nature is not part of some money-making monster.

Rather it carries out a key function of art in helping us to see beyond our own personal experience and view the world in a new way.

by MARK BROWN

video

Dignity in the face of horror

exhibition

by NIGEL DAVEY



THIS drawing is part of an exhibition about suffragette and revolutionary socialist Sylvia Pankhurst at the Women's Library in east London.

The exhibition explores how Sylvia combined her art (she

won a scholarship to the Royal Academy) with her militant activism, particularly her East End Federation of Suffragettes.

■"Sylvia Pankhurst: Artist and Campaigner" is at the Women's Library, Old

Castle Street, London (Aldgate East ☺) until 31 August.

Entrance is free. Open Mondays to Fridays 9.30am-5.30pm (except Thursdays 9.30am-8pm), Saturdays 10am-4pm, Sundays closed.

radio

The poet of Harlem

by JUDY COX

LANGSTON HUGHES was one of the greatest and most popular black US writers of the 20th century.

He was one of the leading lights of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s.

This was a movement that celebrated black culture and was associated with very left wing politics.

Hughes went to Spain to fight against General Franco's fascists in 1937, and wrote poems condemned the lynching of black people in the south of the US.

This year marks the centenary of Hughes's birth, and to mark the event Radio 3 is broadcasting a programme about his life, his art, his travels, his gay sexuality and his influence on music from jazz to hip-hop.

■The Darker Brother, Sunday 25 August, 5.45pm, Radio 3.

EVEN AMID the horror of full scale war there exists an obscene taboo. It is the fate of those soldiers who are severely wounded and mutilated.

So when Margaret Thatcher ordered a Falklands War victory parade, such casualties were told not to attend.

Thatcher feared the sight might dull the public's appetite for war.

The Officers' Ward is a sombre yet beautiful film about such soldiers.

It is set in France during the First World War, a war fought to maintain empires.

A young, good looking French officer, an engineer, is ordered forward to build a bridge.

A shell explodes on top of him. Without even seeing the enemy his war is over.

Now he must fight a different battle—he has survived but has lost most of his face.

The film follows his rehabilitation in a French military hospital.

The story is incredibly tender in the way it treats its subjects.

Don't be put off watching this because of its realistic and harrowing scenes.

The film's strength is that you, the viewer, soon forget the mutilations and identify with human beings who, though having lost their physical identities, are still

people struggling to rebuild shattered lives.

The film raises all the questions that make the casualties so fearful. How will your family respond when they see you? Will your kids run in terror from you? Can you form relationships when you appear so grotesque?

How do you square your injuries and what you have lost with the call to patriotism?

In the First World War, nine million soldiers died and 50 percent of all serving soldiers were either killed, wounded or captured.

Dignity

Of the total wounded 12 percent were classified "gueules cassées"—men with broken faces.

The film is based on accounts of such people and their long struggle to find dignity.

They found this in real life by forming groups like the Union of Disfigured Men.

In France they took over a country house and turned it into a sort of retreat for the disfigured.

Their leader, Colonel Picot, said the house would be "a place worthy of them, a chateau like those acquired by the men who got rich when we lost our faces".

This video is a moving and all too timely reminder of the horrors of war.

■The Officers' Ward is released on video and DVD next week.

book

More than just people's opium

by KEVIN OVENDEN

A CLASSIC Marxist account of religion, *The Meek and the Militant* by Paul N Siegel, has been reprinted in a special deal for London's socialist bookshop, Bookmarks.

It takes as its starting point Marx's famous description of religion as "the sigh of the oppressed, the heart in the heartless world, the opium of the people".

This has often been misinterpreted as meaning that religion is like a drug, administered by rulers to confuse those they oppress.

But Siegel, following Marx, shows that while religion does play that role it also provides a range of ideas people have appealed to throughout history as they resist oppression.

So different gospels in the New Testament reflect

changing attitudes to the rich and the poor.

He shows how the major world religions themselves have been shaped by real social and political forces.

Siegel explains how religious schisms and disputes—such as between Catholicism and Protestantism, or different interpretations of Islam—are a product of social conflict.

The book is far stronger at examining the rise of religions than it is at explaining how religious ideas fit in with political struggles today.

But it is a must for anyone who wants to take on the rubbish we hear today about religion.

There are only a couple of hundred copies in print, so get in quick.

■To order your copy phone Bookmarks on 020 7638 1848, e-mail enquiries@bookmarks.uk.com or go to www.bookmarks.uk.com



INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

The workers create all the wealth under capitalism. A new society can only be constructed when they collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say. It has to be overthrown.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class.

They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle.

We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls. We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence.

We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country. In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism.

In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties.

We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbians and gays.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

We urge all those who agree with our policies to join with us in the struggle to build the revolutionary party.

Marxist forums

The Socialist Workers Party is hosting Marxist forums across England and Wales. Why not come along and join in the discussion?



ACTON
WorldCom and Enron: crony capitalism or crisis of the system?

Tue 27 Aug, 7.30pm, West London Trade Union Club, Acton High St.

BARNSELEY
Argentina in revolt: video showing

Wed 28 Aug, 7.30pm, Barnsley Library.

BAYSWATER
Is fascism on the rise?

Thu 29 Aug, 7.30pm, Coffee Island, 30 Westbourne Grove (opp Saqi Books). *With Gary McFarlane.*

BIRKENHEAD
WorldCom and Enron: crony capitalism or crisis of the system?

Thu 22 Aug, 7.30pm, Oxtan Green Community Centre, Christchurch Rd.

BIRMINGHAM CENTRAL
How capitalism underdeveloped Africa

Sat 24 Aug, 3pm, Upstairs, Bar Academy, 51 Dale End. *With Gavin Capps.*

BIRMINGHAM STIRCHLEY
The war on terrorism: who's terrorising who?

Thu 29 Aug, 7.30pm, Starchley Community Centre, Pershore Rd.

BLOOMSBURY
Palestine, the West Bank: an eyewitness report

Wed 28 Aug, 7pm, Room 5, Drill Hall, 16 Chenies St.

BRADFORD
Islam and Islamophobia

Sat 24 Aug, 2.30pm, Love Apple Cafe, Great Horton Rd.

BRENT
Woomera breakout: video showing

Sun 8 Sep, 3.30pm, Willesden Library Centre, 95 Willesden High Rd.

BRICK LANE
Why is Iraq Bush and Blair's next victim?

Tue 27 Aug, 7.30pm, Coffee@Brick Lane (cnr of Brick Lane and Buxton St). *With Judy Cox.*

BRIGHTON
Che Guevara: more than a revolutionary icon?

Sun 1 Sep, 7pm, Phoenix Community Centre, Phoenix Place. *With Judith Orr.*

BRISTOL GLOUCESTER ROAD
Are women equal in the 21st century?

Sun 8 Sep, 3pm, Casa Sudacca, Zetland Rd.

BROMLEY
The legacy of Che Guevara

Sun 25 Aug, 2pm, Balcony, Cafe Giardino, Glades Shopping Centre (first floor).

BURNLEY
Are women equal today?

Tue 27 Aug, 7.30pm, Shalamar, Church St. *With Karen Reissmann.*

BURY PARK
Can workers run society?

Thu 22 Aug, 7.30pm, LHTC (above Jillani Fashion), 179-185 Dunstable Rd, Bury Pk. *With Jane Hardy.*

CALEDONIAN ROAD
New Labour and the unions: is the honeymoon over?

Thu 29 Aug, 7.30pm, Shillibeers Restaurant, North Rd. *With Dave Hayes.*

CAMBERWELL
Can we save the planet?

Tue 3 Sep, 7pm, Tadam's, Camberwell Church St, Camberwell Green.

CAMBRIDGE
As the stockmarkets crash, is capitalism in crisis?

Thu 29 Aug, 7.30pm, Jaffe Net Cafe, Mill Rd. *With Rob Hoveman.*

CANTERBURY
The Middle East, oil and war

Thu 12 Sep, 7.30pm, Canterbury Wholefoods, Jewry Lane.

CARDIFF
Does New Labour need the trade unions?

Tue 27 Aug, 7.30pm, Atlantic Coffee House, City Rd.

CHESTERFIELD
Have women got equality?

Thu 22 Aug, 7.30pm, Assembly Rooms, Market Hall. *With Jill Chanter.*

COLCHESTER
From punk to Pop Idol: how capitalism steals music

Mon 2 Sep, 8pm, RAD, Southway. *With Martin Smith.*

CRAWLEY
Crime and capitalism

Wed 28 Aug, 7.30pm, Three Bridges Community Centre, Gales Place, Three Bridges.

CREWE
What would a socialist society be like?

Wed 4 Sep, 7pm, Crown, Earl St.

CROYDON
Do all American workers back Bush?

Thu 29 Aug, 7.30pm, Spice Cafe, Surrey St.

DUDLEY
Iraq, war and imperialism

Thu 5 Sep, 8pm, Claughton Community Centre, Blowers Green.

EALING
Revolution: is it possible?

Thu 5 Sep, 7.30pm, Drayton Ct, The Avenue, West Ealing. *With Alan Kenny.*

EAST HAM
Islam and Islamophobia

Thu 29 Aug, 6.30pm, Barveens Cafe, St John's Rd (opposite car park). *With Hassan Mahamdallie.*

ELEPHANT & CASTLE
Terrorism: is it the response of the dispossessed?

Wed 4 Sep, 7.30pm, Cafe Tas, Borough High St.

ENFIELD
Che Guevara: more than a revolutionary icon?

Thu 22 Aug, 7.30pm, Edmonton Community Centre, Plevna St.

GATESHEAD
Anti-capitalism: reform or revolution?

Tue 27 Aug, 7.30pm, Coffee Bar, Gateshead Library, Prince Consort Rd.

HACKNEY HOMERTON
As the stockmarkets wobble: is capitalism collapsing?

Thu 22 Aug, 7.30pm, Chat's Palace, Chatsworth Rd. *With Chris Harman.*

HACKNEY SHOREDITCH
Che Guevara: the truth behind the T-shirt

Thu 22 Aug, 8pm, Barley Mow, Curtain Rd.

HACKNEY STAMFORD HILL
The war on terror: one year on

Wed 11 Sep, 7.30pm, Cyprus House, Manor Parade.

HACKNEY WICK
If big business can cross borders, why can't people?

Sun 25 Aug, 4pm, Quality Cafe, 244 Morning Lane. *With Judy Cox.*

HARRINGAY GREEN LANES
After Johannesburg: can we save the environment?

Wed 4 Sep, 7.30pm, Cafe Delices du Jour, 533 Green Lanes (cnr of Hewitt Rd). *With Ian Rappel.*

HUDDERSFIELD
Socialism and war

Thu 12 Sep, 6pm, Coffeevolution, Wood St.

ILFORD
Music and resistance

Tue 3 Sep, 7.30pm, Icon Bar and Restaurant, 262 Ilford High Rd.

IPSWICH
Che Guevara: more than a revolutionary icon?

Mon 26 Aug, 8pm, Cafe Marx, CAB, Tower St.

LADBROKE GROVE
Why does Bush want to attack Iraq?

Tue 27 Aug, 7.30pm, Green Room, Paddington Arts Centre, Woodfield Rd. *With Alex Callinicos.*

LEEDS CHAPELTOWN
Reggae, racism and resistance

Thu 29 Aug, 7.30pm, West Indian Centre, Laycock Pl. *With Marvin Scott.*

LEEDS CITY CENTRE
How can we save the environment?

Tue 3 Sep, 7.30pm, Swarthmore Centre (opp Park Lane College).

LEEDS HEADINGLEY
Why do Bush and Blair want war at any price?

Tue 3 Sep, 7.30pm, All Hallows Church, Regents Terrace (off Hyde Park Rd).

LEICESTER
Does the movement need political parties?

Mon 2 Sep, 7.30pm, Mozart Cafe, London Rd.

MANCHESTER CENTRAL
The bloody history of British imperialism

Sat 24 Aug, 3pm, Unitarian Chapel, Cross St.

MANCHESTER RUSHOLME
Martin Luther King: can peaceful methods change a violent world?

Thu 22 Aug, 6.30pm, Dil Dar Cafe, 111 Wilmslow Rd.

MUSWELL HILL
The bloody history of US imperialism

Thu 5 Sep, 7.30pm, Sasa Thai Restaurant.

NEATH
Iraq, war and imperialism

Thu 22 Aug, 7.30pm, Castle Hotel, The Parade. *With Huw Williams.*

NEW CROSS
Reggae, racism and resistance

Tue 27 Aug, 7pm, Moonbow Jake's Cafe Bar (between New Cross Gate ☹ and New Cross ☺). *With Martin Smith.*

NORTHAMPTON
Antonio Gramsci and the search for the new proletarian order

Thu 22 Aug, 7.30pm, Msaada Cafe, Kettering Rd (cnr of Clare St). *With Chris Bambery.*

NOTTINGHAM HOCKLEY
Che Guevara: the truth behind the T-shirt

Tue 27 Aug, 7pm, Vans Bar, Broad St (opp Broadway Cinema).

OLDHAM
Can war bring peace?

Sat 7 Sep, 2pm, Cafe Bar 360, Gallery Oldham, Greaves St.

OXFORD
Are women liberated today?

Thu 22 Aug, 7.30pm, Mitre Hotel, High St.

PLYMOUTH
Che Guevara: more than a revolutionary icon?

Mon 2 Sep, 7.30pm, Martinsgate Education Centre, Bretonside.

PRESTON
The Middle East, oil and war

Mon 26 Aug, 7.30pm, Unity Community Centre, Shepherd St (off Church St).

READING
Is violence necessary to achieve a socialist revolution?

Sat 31 Aug, 4pm, Reading International Solidarity Centre, London St.

ROCHESTER
Can Palestine be free?

Thu 29 Aug, 8pm, Eon Internet Cafe, Rochester High St (opp Oxfam).

ST ALBANS
Are New Labour the new Tories?

Mon 2 Sep, 7.30pm, Trinity Church, Victoria St.

SHEFFIELD BURNGREAVE
The bloody history of US imperialism

Fri 30 Aug, 7.30pm, Yemeni Community Centre, Burngreave Rd.

SHEFFIELD CARBROOK OFFICE WORKERS
Workers: what are we worth?

Thu 22 Aug, 5.30pm, Carbrook Hall pub, Attercliffe Common.

SHEFFIELD CENTRAL
1968: the fire last time

Sat 24 Aug, 4pm, Coffee Revolution, Church St.

SHEFFIELD CRYSTAL PEAKS
Can Bush's empire be stopped?

Mon 2 Sep, 7.30pm, Art Space, Crystal Peaks Shopping Centre.

SHEFFIELD DARNALL
Revolution: the only solution?

Wed 4 Sep, 7.30pm, Darnall and District Medical Aid Society, Fisher Lane. *With Dave Hayes.*

SOUTHAMPTON
As the stockmarkets wobble: is capitalism collapsing?

Mon 2 Sep, 7.30pm, Freedom Cafe, High St. *With Ian Birchall.*

TOOTING
Globalisation and workers' revolt in Latin America

Wed 4 Sep, 7.45pm, Derinton Rd Community Centre.

WALTHAMSTOW
The war on terror: who's terrorising who?

Thu 22 Aug, 7.30pm, Cafe Rio, 85 High St.

WATFORD
Does the media control our ideas?

Thu 29 Aug, 7.30pm, West Watford Community Centre, Harwood Rd. *With Mark Thomas.*

WIGAN
Globalisation and US capitalism

Wed 4 Sep, 8pm, Mabs Cross Hotel.

WOOLWICH
Che Guevara: more than a popular icon?

Thu 22 Aug, 7.30pm, Earl of Chatham.

YORK
Globalisation: if big business can cross borders, why can't people?

Thu 29 Aug, 7.30pm, Priory St Centre. *With Graham Mustin.*

Contact socialists near you

Barnsley

☎ 07881 558 590

Birmingham

☎ 07949 028 362

Black Country

☎ 07941 834 125

Bradford

☎ 07811 403 299

Brighton

☎ 07808 368 551

Bristol

☎ 07711 718 519

Cambridge

☎ 07950 142 464

Cardiff

☎ 07788 770 741

Central London

☎ 07957 316 094

Chesterfield

☎ 07881 558 590

Coventry

☎ 07712 047 873

East Anglia

☎ 07946 269 024

East London

☎ 07753 697 743

Exeter

☎ 07939 558 115

Hackney

☎ 07813 135 922

Home Counties

☎ 07905 589 865

Kent

☎ 07761 279 983

Lancashire East

☎ 07968 952 180

Lancashire West

☎ 07931 725 633

Leeds & West

Yorkshire

☎ 07757 491 497

Manchester

☎ 07946 413 763

Merseyside

☎ 07951 241 562

North London

☎ 07957 209 057

Norwich

☎ 07733 137 201

Nottingham

☎ 07956 477 778

Plymouth

☎ 07803 620 390

Portsmouth

☎ 07801 290 411

Sheffield

☎ 07905 678 506

South East

London

☎ 07951 737 003

South London

☎ 07939 017 973

Southampton

☎ 07811 210 036

Swansea

☎ 07813 809 238

Thames Valley

☎ 07929 618 579

Tyneside

INDIA: 2 DECEMBER 1984by **TIM EDWARDS**

Multinational poisoned city

DOW CHEMICALS is one of George Bush's favourite multinational companies.

In June Bush awarded the company the National Medal of Technology.

Dow Chemicals now owns a company called Union Carbide.

Union Carbide was widely held to be responsible for the worst industrial massacre in history—the Bhopal disaster.

The chemical industry is pushing to prevent the introduction of new health and safety laws at next week's Earth Summit.

THE DISASTER struck the Indian city of Bhopal at midnight on 2 December 1984.

A massive gas cloud leaked from the US-owned Union Carbide pesticides plant, engulfing 500,000 desperately poor people.

Within hours the historic city was turned into a huge gas chamber.

An estimated 8,000 or more people choked and retched out their lives in Bhopal's alleys and streets.

They died in terror, their eyes, throats and lungs on fire as the gases stripped the linings from their lungs and they drowned in their own fluids.

Things are nearly as bad in Bhopal today as they were on that night 18 years ago.

Thirty people still die every month from the effects of the gas.

The death toll today stands at well over 20,000, more than six times the number killed on 11 September.

Up to 150,000 Bhopalis suffer from chronic health problems because of the gas, including breathlessness, brain damage, cancers, mental illnesses and birth defects.

When Union Carbide finally left Bhopal in 1998, it left around 5,000 tonnes of its waste chemicals behind to leach into the soil and water around the factory.

Blood

The environmentalist group Greenpeace has declared the site a "global toxic hotspot" but some 20,000 people still live near the factory—they are too poor to move away.

A gas survivor, Ram Quari Bai, says, "Diseases have got stuck to us like insects drinking our blood."

"When the gas came everything fell, and everything fell through our hands. And what are we left with? Not even our health."

The appalling misery was directly caused by the ruthless drive for profits.

The disaster reveals the multinationals' racist double

standards.

It also shows the routine exploitation of workers that happens everywhere in the world.

Union Carbide produced a pesticide, MIC, that was so deadly when tested on rats that it refused to publish the results.

But it chose to produce and store MIC at a plant in Bhopal with nearly 120,000 people living close by.

The plant had a history of cost cutting.

Costs

In 1982 one worker was killed and 18 were injured.

This prompted the trade union in the plant to put up posters warning about the dangers.

Management responded by sacking the leaders and cutting costs still further.

The workforce halved between 1980 and 1984.

Maintenance supervisors were cut and safety training for workers was slashed from six months to 15 days.

The chemical was stored in quantities 130 times that



NOT CAMBODIA or Rwanda but Bhopal: victims of a multinational

permitted in Europe.

Cooling systems meant to keep it stable were shut down five months before the disaster, to save between \$10 and \$30 a day.

Vital gauges and indicators were defective and the flare tower meant to burn off gas emissions was not working when disaster hit.

Local people were never even warned of the lethal gas

leak because the safety siren had been turned off.

But management did have prior knowledge of the dangers.

In May 1982 a US safety audit found a total of 61 hazards, 30 of them major and 11 in the dangerous MIC units.

It warned of a "higher potential for a serious incident or more serious consequences if an incident should occur".

'Bhopal is everywhere'

THE CHEMICAL bosses are getting away with murder.

On 24 May this year the bosses' CBI organisation applied to a Bhopal court to have outstanding charges against Warren Anderson, former chief executive of

Union Carbide, dropped from "culpable homicide" to "negligence".

"Culpable homicide" draws a penalty of ten years imprisonment. "Negligence" carries only two years in prison. If Warren is found guilty of negligence he cannot be extradited to India.

But the survivors' organisations in Bhopal have been fighting for 18 years and they are not giving up now.

Bhopal campaigner Sati-nath Sarangi, along with Rashida Bi, recently ended 19 days on hunger strike in New Delhi against these moves.

Rule

She says, "Because an exemplary punishment of Carbide/Dow would set limits on the conduct of other multinational corporations, and so affect their profits, the US administration has openly and blatantly pressured the Indian government to hinder the course of justice in Bhopal."

The Indian courts are due to rule on the dilution of the charges on 27 August, next Tuesday.

Activist Sathyu Sarangi said recently, "Bhopal is like a window. You can see the

world through it."

She is right. That's why the fight for justice for the victims of Bhopal has sparked solidarity round the world and is part of the growing international anti-capitalist movement.

Sathyu said, "Today, wherever we may be, there are slow and silent Bhopals happening all around us."

"Every human body on the planet is contaminated with dioxin, the most potent man-made carcinogen known."

"When did we give big business the right to put dioxin in our bodies? We never did, of course—but now we must fight to be rid of it."

"We look forward to the day when communities will win back control of their environments, their health and what goes into their bodies."

"We believe that a millennium without Bhopals is possible."

"The change is happening every day. In every corner of the world communities and individuals are confronting giant corporations. And, increasingly, we are winning."

Solidarity action is being coordinated through the www.bhopal.net site.

Compensation of 5p a day

FOR 18 years the survivors have been waiting for proper medical care, for adequate compensation, and for justice from a company that has refused to admit any responsibility.

Dow Chemicals is one of the world's biggest corporations, with the best lawyers and the most powerful high level government allies.

After the disaster Union Carbide sacked its workforce without redundancy pay. When the workers won a court ruling for compensation in 2000, Union Carbide launched a legal challenge.

Mehboob Bi lost eight members of her family, including her two month old baby and her husband who worked at the plant.

She says, "I lost my husband. I lost my house and property. I lost my money. Look, look at my condition. Sometimes we sleep

only with a glass of water. If my hands and feet work I earn and we eat our roti [bread] or else we eat nothing."

In 1989 the multimillion dollar company forged a "settlement" with the Indian government, giving the survivors compensation of around \$500 (£350) each. That's around 5p for every day since the disaster.

Company

Kathy Hunt, Dow's public affairs spokesperson, stated, "\$500 is plenty good enough for an Indian."

Bhopal ultimately cost Union Carbide only 30p a share. This fact was celebrated in its annual report after the settlement was agreed.

No one from the company has been prosecuted. The Indian

courts issued an arrest warrant for Warren Anderson, a top Union Carbide executive—it has simply been ignored.

The company has consistently refused to help clear up the contamination it caused. A Dow executive even suggested that survivors' paltry compensation should be used for cleaning the area.

The US India Business Council is an unaccountable club of 60 of the largest US corporations that lobby Indian government ministers.

In 2000 it warned the Indian government that a potential barrier to US investment was "concerns about liability mechanisms in the event of a disaster".

In India the chemical industry is growing at five times the global rate.

Bhopal could happen again.

ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN BY 12 NOON MONDAY

In brief

Burnley residents back the strikers

AROUND 100 GMB union members are taking strike action at Lupton & Place's two die-casting factories in Burnley.

They have already struck for three days and planned a further three-day strike this week.

The workers have not had a pay rise for years.

Management wrote to residents in Athletic Street, where the larger factory is based, inviting them to complain to the police about the picket line. However, the neighbours came to the picket line with cups of tea, bacon sandwiches and garden chairs instead.

Workers are demanding a 3.5 percent pay rise.

■ **Send donations and messages of support to Lupton & Place Strike, c/o GMB Office, 29 Ormerod Road, Burnley, Lancashire BB11 2RU.**

NHS staff want to sweep out low pay

HUNDREDS OF Swansea hospital workers are to be balloted on strike action over a pay claim against private contractor Mediclean.

The ballot will involve all Mediclean staff employed in the Swansea NHS Trust area and will include porters, cleaners and telephonists.

An NHS cleaner earns £4.62 an hour but over 50 percent of the Mediclean staff employed on the Swansea trust contract earn no more than £4.10, the current legal minimum wage.

Now Inverclyde follows Glasgow

AROUND 80 cleaners, porters and other staff struck at Inverclyde Royal Hospital in Greenock over pay on Monday.

They were following the example of the Glasgow Royal Infirmary workers (see page 7).

The Inverclyde workers at present earn from £4.47 to £4.69 an hour.

Bradford fights for real justice

THE FAIR Justice for All campaign, set up to contest the harsh jail sentences handed out following last year's disturbances in Bradford, now has a website.

The campaign has also called a rally for Monday of next week where families of those jailed and their supporters plan to meet outside Bradford Crown Court.

"We want to show the level of support we have," says Sal from the campaign.

"The police and authorities have been forced to allow our peaceful rally to go ahead. We were determined and said we would do it anyway."

■ **Phone the campaign on 07966 215 696 or go to www.fairjusticecampaign.co.uk**

Second accused faces the court

THE SECOND person went to court this week accused of crimes arising from the campaign last year to keep Govanhill pool in Glasgow open.

The prosecution case against 16 year old pool worker Qasim Khan has already been heard.

Of the nine people charged, six are black. All nine have lodged complaints about police misconduct.

■ **E-mail the campaign at saveourpool@aol.com Send donations to Southside Against Closure, c/o Community Centre, Daisy Street, Govanhill, Glasgow.**

Journalists

Journalists right to start the offensive

THE SPATE of disputes involving journalists is accelerating, with strikes and ballots for action this week from London to Yorkshire and Scotland.

JOURNALISTS AT a major magazine publisher will strike for the day on Friday 30 August.

The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) members at EMAP Healthcare/PSM in London backed action by an 83 percent majority on a 97 percent turnout.

The publisher's key titles include *Nursing Times*, *Health Service Journal* and the *Local Government Chronicle*.

The 37 NUJ members are demanding a £1,250 across the board pay rise and £25,000 a year minimum.

At present people on the same job have salaries up to £7,000 apart.

Management have offered only a £500 a year rise and a minimum of £21,000 a year.

One NUJ member said, "We had a five-year campaign for union recognition, which we won in April."

"Now it's payback time."

"EMAP, which made £30 million profit last year, gave a 'golden goodbye' of £927,000 in June to failed boss Kevin Hand. That would have settled our pay claim ten times over."

■ **Send messages of support to Tash Shifrin, NUJ MoC, EMAP, Greater London House, Hampstead Road, London NW1 7EJ, e-mail tashshifrin@hotmail.com**

Rotherham Advertiser

JOURNALISTS AT the *Rotherham Advertiser* newspaper planned to start a one-week strike on Saturday over low pay.

The 13 NUJ members on three titles backed action in a ballot after rejecting a 2.3 percent pay offer from owner Garnett Dickenson.

Trainee journalists get

£13,000 and qualified staff between £17,000 and £19,000 a year. Workers are demanding a 10 percent rise.

A solidarity rally was planned to mark the start of the strike.

■ **Rally, Saturday 24 August, 12 noon, outside the company, Fitzwilliam Road, Rotherham.**

Council workers



Picture: MIKE COHEN

Pay

COUNCIL WORKERS across England, Wales and Northern Ireland are still being consulted on a pay offer their union leaders want them to accept.

The offer came after council workers in the Unison, GMB and TGWU unions staged a one-day strike on 17 July.

Union leaders called off further action when employers made some marginal improvements in the offer, though all the extra amounts to is around 0.5 percent for most workers.

■ **Leaflets putting the case for a no vote are available from Socialist Worker's industrial department—phone 020 7987 1919.**

WESTMINSTER council workers (above) are continuing their fight against plans by their Tory council to privatise up to 80 percent of council services.

National union officials of their Unison union were due to meet this week to discuss possible escalation of the action.

This is a crucial strike which has bosses worried.

Rahul Patel, assistant branch secretary of Westminster Unison, says, "Westminster city councillors have said that this is an experiment that could take local government into the 21st century."

"They want to use the

Scotland

TWO OF Scotland's national newspaper groups face industrial action by journalists angered by bullying managers.

The National Union of Journalists chapels (office branches) at the *Scotsman* in Edinburgh, and the *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail* in Glasgow have both voted to ballot on strike action.

At the Scotsman group, which also includes the *Edinburgh Evening News* and *Scotland on Sunday*, editor in chief Andrew Neil is trying to cut more jobs.

Andrew Neil is infamous in the industry for his role as an editor for Rupert Murdoch during his union-busting operation at Wapping in the 1980s.

Staffing on the Scottish papers is already at a low level. An NUJ survey has shown that average unpaid overtime among journalists is 31 percent of contracted hours.

NUJ Scottish organiser Paul Holleran said, "This means the papers are 30 percent understaffed. Andrew Neil has

got rid of dozens of jobs over the last few years, mainly through non-replacement of people leaving."

Neil has also imposed a pay freeze for this year.

In July the NUJ chapel unanimously voted that: "This workforce declares it has no confidence in Andrew Neil and calls for him to resign his positions as publisher and editor-in-chief of The Scotsman Publications."

His response was to further anger his staff by saying that criticism by the NUJ was "like a gnat on the backside of a hippopotamus".

Meanwhile in Glasgow at the *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail* NUJ members have also voted to hold a ballot for action over management's failure to agree a house agreement, and over one particular personal case.

The Trinity Mirror owned group agreed to recognise the NUJ last year, but is refusing to extend improved terms to all staff.

Press freedom

A NATIONAL Union of Journalists branch secretary was held for hours under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and had his camera seized and his documents taken and copied.

Photographer Stalingrad O'Neill, whose work has

appeared in *Socialist Worker*, is secretary of the union's Birmingham branch.

On 8 August he flew from Birmingham to Belfast, where he had work as a photographer and was also due to attend a Troops Out Conference as a trade union delegate.

O'Neill was stopped at Birmingham airport on his way to Belfast. He was questioned for some time.

On his return on 12 August he was stopped again and held by police in Birmingham for more than two hours.

Police officers seized eight rolls of undeveloped film. His personal filofax was taken from him and photocopied.

The NUJ has strongly protested over the case, and considers the police action an unwarranted attack on the freedom of the press.

Union lawyers took up the case, and on 14 August the film was returned.

The NUJ has now written to demand that Sir Edward Crew, chief constable of West Midlands police, investigates the case as a matter of urgency and deals with the officers in question.

NUJ branches should support this move.

International solidarity



AROUND 120 people demonstrated outside the South African embassy in London last week in solidarity with 87 people who went on trial in Johannesburg.

The accused included Trevor Ngwane who was interviewed in *Socialist Worker* last week.

The London protest was called by Globalise Resistance and was

supported by War on Want and the World Development Movement. Speakers at the protest included RMT union official Glenroy Watson.

In Johannesburg hundreds protested and the cases were adjourned until 23 October, a sign that the state is nervous about moving on the issue.

Protests were also held in France, Canada and the United States.

Palestine

OVER 200 people gathered outside Scotland's national football stadium, Hampden Park, in Glasgow on Friday of last week to protest at next month's under-21 football match between Scotland and Israel.

One of the protesters, Osama Saeed, said, "The authorities say sport is above politics, but

the same organisation cancelled a Scotland game with Yugoslavia in the 1990s because 'the political situation wasn't right'."

Bill Speirs, head of the Scottish TUC, said, "At a time when Palestinian boys cannot get to a football pitch because of restrictions, this match seems particularly inappropriate."

Phil Billows

A RALLY has been called in defence of Phil Billows. He is the Unison union branch secretary at Barts and the Royal London Hospital Trust in east London.

Trust bosses suspended Phil from his job over one month ago.

Phil has been at the forefront of the fight against the PFI scheme at the hospital trust.

Ballot papers go out this week for an indicative vote to see if workers are willing to strike if Phil is sacked.

■ **Rally, Thursday 29 August, 7pm, Jagonari Centre, corner of Vallance Road and Whitechapel Road, London. Speakers include Geoff Martin, Unison London Region convenor.**

council, 12 noon-4.30pm, Council Chamber, Birmingham Town Hall.

● **Saturday 14 September** Protest against New Labour's new mental health bill, 12 noon, Whitehall Place, London.

● **Monday 16 September** Bristol peace vigil with Tony Benn, 5.30-6.30pm, opposite Hippodrome, Bristol city centre.

● **Saturday 28 September** Stop the War Coalition national demonstration. Assemble 1pm, Embankment, London. Supported by CND. Phone 07951 235 915 or go to www.stopwar.org.uk

Civil service

AROUND 5,000 members of the civil servants' PCS union in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) are preparing to ballot on industrial action.

They want equal pay between workers from the former Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) and the former Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR).

A series of one-day stoppages and a rolling programme of selective strike action lasting months last year secured a 10 percent rise, or a minimum of £2,000, for all former MAFF staff.

However, full pay parity requires a further £2,000 increase for many staff.

● **Saturday 12 October** Socialist Alliance conference on the euro, South Camden Community School, Charrington Street, London. Phone 020 7791 3138.

● **Saturday 12 October** Scrap Trident national demonstration, 12 noon, Plymouth Hoe. Overnight accommodation available Friday. Details 07873 620 390. Called by CND.

● **Thursday 7 November-Saturday 9 November** European Social Forum, Florence, Italy. Phone 020 7053 2072 or go to www.mobilise.org.uk for transport and booking details.

Diary
Upcoming events

Saturday 31 August

● Another World is Possible festival, 1pm-9pm, Tankerton Slopes, Whitstable, Kent.

Sunday 1 September

● Love Music—Hate Racism carnival, Platt Fields Park, Manchester. Phone 020 7924 0333.

Saturday 7 September

● Socialist Alliance national

Postal workers

National vote starts on strikes

Balfour Beatty

IN FEBRUARY 1999 Balfour Beatty was fined a record £1.2 million for breaches in health and safety during its construction of a new rail link to Heathrow airport.

The judge called the incident "one of the worst civil engineering disasters in the United Kingdom in the last quarter of a century."

"It is a matter of chance whether death or any serious injury resulted from these serious breaches."

One of the tunnels Balfour Beatty was working on had collapsed in October 1994.

The collapse left a crater which dragged down car parks and shook buildings, and crushed the Piccadilly Line of London's underground system.

In 1993 the company was fined £17,500 by the Health and Safety Executive for breaching safety rules at its Derbyshire foundry, where a worker was crushed to death.

But by far the most serious incidents occurred during the construction of the Channel Tunnel.

Balfour Beatty was one of five British companies contracted to build the tunnel. All five were found guilty of failing to ensure the safety of seven workers who were killed during the construction period.

Balfour Beatty was also associated with the Ilisu Dam project in Turkey, which threatened to cause social and environmental disaster for Kurdish people in the region. The company pulled out only after massive protests.

Do postal workers really want people with this record as managers?

A NATIONAL strike ballot involving all 180,000 postal staff in Britain begins next Tuesday.

It has been called by the CWU union in opposition to management plans to launch a joint venture with one of Britain's nastiest multinationals.

Bosses want to transfer 4,000 CWU members in the Romec cleaning and maintenance section to a new company 49 percent owned by construction group Balfour Beatty.

Post Office executives have refused to give the CWU assurances that they will not sell their remaining stake to Balfour Beatty, which would affect CWU members' pension rights.

"Management have refused to give the basic guarantees that the union has requested," says Ray Ellis, the union's assistant secretary.

"The union is balloting to ensure that the whole membership can unite to protect our Romec colleagues."

The strike vote covers Royal Mail, Parcelforce and high street Post Office staff.

Resistance against the Romec joint venture can

by CHARLIE KIMBER

be a big step towards throwing back the Post Office bosses' privatisation agenda.

It could be a big setback for the new chairman, Allan Leighton, who New Labour ministers have put in charge to discipline the workforce.

For too long CWU leaders have hesitated to start real resistance to the bosses' and government's programme of "opening the market" to private firms.

Now is a chance to fight alongside others as a new mood of resistance gathers in the public sector.

□ **POSTAL workers at the East London Mail Centre in Whitechapel are balloting on industrial action over London weighting allowance.**

Waterlooville

AROUND 160 postal workers in Waterlooville, near Portsmouth, began the process of voting on strike action this week. Royal Mail managers have imposed job cuts and a reduction in hours at the delivery office.

CWU negotiators suspended national negotiations on Tailored Delivery Services (the new delivery systems)

until the threat of an imposed deal at Waterlooville was withdrawn.

Royal Mail managers at the Waterlooville delivery office notified CWU reps on Wednesday of last week that they intended to reduce over-all staff hours from Monday.

The cost of 1,000 hours a week was roughly equivalent to axing 40 jobs.

Glasgow



OVER 2,000 Glasgow postal workers walked out on unofficial strike last week in a dispute over jobs.

Royal Mail plans to shift around 70 workers out of the main Springburn centre and put them in delivery offices.

Many of those affected fear that the new jobs will only be temporary and will soon disappear. There is a

national agreement designed to prevent such fake transfers.

The walkout began among 20 workers on a late shift and quickly spread to all the workers at Springburn. At least nine delivery offices also joined the action.

The national union did not support the strike. John Keggie, the union's deputy general secretary, was flown to

Glasgow for a mass meeting (above). It lasted several hours and saw many workers unwilling to return on the terms offered.

However, a majority agreed to go back on the basis that the transfers would be suspended for the moment and further negotiations would take place to make sure the national agreement was implemented.

Reality call centres

A calling for action

AROUND 6,000 workers in Reality call centres, part of the Great Universal Stores (GUS) empire, will be balloted from next Wednesday for strike action over a threat to their jobs.

The workers fear their jobs will go as Reality, a home shopping company, is transferring work to call centres in India.

"We are talking about going to war with this company, and we want you to stand up and be counted," said Anne Hickson, an Usdaw union official, at a 150-strong union meeting for

workers on the Burnley site last week.

There is a mixed Asian and white workforce on the Burnley site who are united in anger against the real enemy—the bosses at Reality and GUS.

GUS chief executive John Peace got a pay package worth £1.5 million this year. One of the non-executive directors is Tory peer Lord Harris of Peckham, who is worth £180 million.

They want to boost their wealth by using workers in

India whose annual pay is on average £1,300 for a call centre worker.

Reality employs workers at centres across the north west of England, including Burnley, Preston, Bolton, Widnes, Leeds, Eccles, Wigan, Oldham, Manchester and Newtown in Mid Wales.

If the workers, members of Usdaw, vote for action they are set to hold two-hour strikes every day for seven weeks.

The ballot closes on 11 September.

Rail workers

DRIVERS ON First North Western trains struck solidly on Tuesday and Wednesday of last week, forcing management to seek talks over pay.

The action brought services to a standstill across the north west of England. It also boosted drivers on Arriva Trains Merseyside, who have voted overwhelmingly to strike over pay.

Their strikes are due to

coincide with those on First North Western on Tuesday and Wednesday of next week.

Rail workers other than drivers on Arriva Trains Northern were to strike on Wednesday and Saturday of this week in their longrunning dispute over pay.

First North Western driver Steve West told *Socialist Worker*, "Last week's strike was by drivers in the Aslef union. But RMT union drivers did not cross picket lines."

"Our ballot result is due this week, and that should add to pressure on the company."

"There are two things about the pay offer that are incensing people. The first is that it is over two years."

Strong

"People know we will fall further behind drivers on other lines if we accept a two-year deal."

"The second is that it comes with big attacks on conditions. Management want total flexibility."

"It would mean, for example, being told on a Monday that your planned job on Wednesday was going to be changed, and that you would have to work an extra 1.5 hours."

"That would ruin social life. There has been more anger over this at rank and file level than among the union reps who accepted the deal management then reneged on."

"We coordinated a strike

Colleges

Education rumbling

THE COLLEGE lecturers' Natfhe union is pushing the government to fund a 5.5 percent pay rise.

That is the average pay rise civil servants have won at the Department for Education and Skills.

Further education (FE) lecturers in Natfhe struck for two days earlier this year against college managements' offer of a 2.3 percent rise.

There is strong support among lecturers for further strikes.

Natfhe general secretary Paul Mackney has suggested strikes during the week of Labour Party conference at the start of October.

There are a number of other pay disputes by lecturers and support staff in colleges and universities.

● University lecturers and support staff are being consulted on a 3.2 percent pay offer. Natfhe is not recommending acceptance to its members.

● FE support staff in the Unison union are preparing to ballot for strikes over pay.

They would be in a position to take action alongside lecturers.

There is also pressure for action over London allowance payments.

● A meeting of Natfhe university reps at the end of last term called for a ballot for strikes in London—with 28 October mentioned as a possible date for action.

● University support staff in Unison are also looking for strike action in London, where there are wide disparities in allowance payments.

● Pressure is also building in the AUT lecturers' union for action in London.

Support staff in universities are already processing student admissions. Most FE support staff and lecturers will begin returning next week.

The two-day FE lecturers' strike revealed a strong feeling for united action across the unions.

Activists are seeking to build on that across colleges and universities too.

Firefighters

ABOUT 1,000 firefighters and their families joined a march in Swansea on Saturday as part of the accelerating national pay campaign.

Two days later 400 marched on the Isle of Wight.

It was the perfect answer to the chief officer there, who had boasted to local Fire Brigades Union (FBU) officials that they would "never get anyone to turn out for a march on the Isle of Wight".

A further march was due in Belfast on Saturday.

The pay campaign is heading towards a major confrontation with the government.

FBU activists across Britain are pulling the stops out for a national rally on Monday 2 September in London.

A recalled conference of the FBU is set for 12 September, where delegates will hear recommendations from their executive for a national strike ballot.

"The feeling on the stations and control rooms is so strong," Stuart Bruton from Cwmbran



ON THE march in Swansea last Saturday

told *Socialist Worker* on the Swansea demonstration.

"Of course no one wants to have to go on strike. But we are determined to get a pay settlement that reflects the value of the work we do, and people are prepared to fight for that."

A fully qualified firefighter gets just £21,531 a year for a

42-hour week.

There are no payments on top for working shifts, and there are no annual increments. There are, however, big pension contributions.

Lawrence Larmond from Neath says, "We don't expect to have members forced to claim Working Families Tax

Credit."

Lee Moriarty from Cardiff was on the Swansea demonstration with his eight year old son, Ben.

Lee said, "I have three children aged two, eight and ten. My wife doesn't go out to work, so the whole family has to rely on my wage."

"You find yourself scrambling around for the last few quid at the end of every month."

"You could say Ben's on the march for a bit of extra pocket money."

The national employers, representing mostly Labour-run fire authorities, are refusing to concede a big pay rise.

The government is worried. John Prescott has held talks with the employers.

But it is also preparing plans to use the army to scab on any strike.

Every trade unionist should be making contact with local FBU members now and inviting them to put their case at union meetings.

Socialist Worker

ANTI NAZI LEAGUE BREAKS POLICE BAN TO CONFRONT BNP

Nazis can't meet without protests

ANTI-NAZIS scored a victory last weekend in the battle against the British National Party (BNP) and its Red, White and Blue “festival” outside Burnley in Lancashire.

The Nazis hoped the police’s five-kilometre exclusion zone around the event would prevent them from facing any opposition.

But anti-Nazis broke the police ban and gathered opposite the entrance to the Nazis’ “festival”.

The protesters shouted and jeered at each Nazi as they arrived in their cars. “It’s not fair,” one Nazi whinged to a policeman. This was just one more humiliation for the BNP.

It could not muster more than 400 people on Saturday and Sunday, according to an eyewitness. This is despite the election of three BNP councillors in nearby Burnley.

The BNP had already been forced to scramble around for a venue after people in the village of Diggle, near Oldham, had refused to let the Nazis meet there.

They opted for a field on the edge of Sawley, some eight miles away from Burnley. Sawley is a tiny village made up of one pub and a scattering of stone cottages.

Here too the Nazis upset local residents. The BNP booked a field that meant a regular car boot sale couldn’t go ahead and a vintage car rally had to be relocated.

Many cars drove up to the entrance of the BNP event, only to turn round and speed off once they realised what it was.

The protest organised by the Anti Nazi League (ANL) challenged the BNP’s lie that it was holding a “family festival”.

The event last year in Welshpool was exposed in secret footage shown on the BBC’s *Panorama*.

Drunken BNP thugs were filmed doing Hitler salutes, singing Nazi marching songs and laughing at sick “jokes” about the Holocaust.

The BNP leader, Nick Griffin, made an openly racist speech at this year’s event, attacking asylum seekers and saying, “Who is this Stephen Lawrence, anyway?”

The Red, White and Blue “festival” is borrowed directly from Le Pen’s National Front in France, even down to using the same name.

It has been part of his strategy to attract soft supporters which the National Front then hopes to turn into hardcore members.

by HELEN SHOOTER

The fact that the festival has been allowed to go ahead has played a key role in Le Pen’s attempt to present himself as a “respectable” politician.

The police’s exclusion zone round last weekend’s “festival” to ban protesters was about treating the BNP as if it is “respectable”.

The ANL condemned this at a press conference last Friday, and confirmed that its supporters would still protest against the BNP.

Spurred

“It is at the discretion of the police and the home secretary to ban this festival. Where there is a will, there is a way,” Shahid Malik, a member of New Labour’s national executive committee, told the press.

“But there is no will. Instead it will cost half a million pounds to protect these Nazis.”

Paul Moore, a Labour councillor for Burnley’s Queensgate ward, also spoke out at the press conference.

“This festival is another way of normalising the BNP and legitimising them. We should be trying to expose them,” he said.

“The ANL’s ‘Love Music—Hate Racism’ festival has been banned from Burnley. It seems there is one set of rules for the Nazis and one for the ANL.”

Chris Gathercole, who has lived for 25 years in Whalley, a village near Sawley, explained how he had been spurred to join the anti-Nazi protest.

“I thought I’ve got to do something about this festival—I’ve got to stand up and be counted.

“So I looked at the Anti Nazi League’s website and we got a petition together.

“We told people we’re against the BNP and how they are associated with violence, and people were grabbing the pen and signing.”



DEMONSTRATING AGAINST the BNP in Burnley earlier this year

Carnival set to be dynamite

A 17 YEAR old student, Jennifer Wilkinson, studying at Lancashire’s Nelson and Colne College, explained why she supported last weekend’s anti-Nazi protest:

“The BNP are racists and they should be stopped.

“Some in my extended family voted for the BNP, but I see myself as an anti-racist success story. I don’t agree with their ideas, and we should go

out and tell the truth about what they stand for.”

The Anti Nazi League’s “Love Music—Hate Racism” carnival on Sunday 1 September is a chance for thousands of young people like Jennifer to celebrate anti-racism.

The headline acts at the free carnival include Ms Dynamite, Doves, The Shining, Heartless Crew and Billy Bragg. There are two stages, a dance marquee and stalls.

The event is going ahead in Manchester after Burnley council withdrew permission for it to be staged locally.

There is just a week to go.

Major

The Anti Nazi League is urging its supporters to get the word out about the carnival and build a major day of black and white unity.

Buzz 88.1 FM, the biggest underground radio station in the north of England, is already publicising the carnival with interviews and adverts.

But there are young people across other parts of Britain who, if they saw a poster or leaflet, would love to come to the Anti Nazi League carnival.

■ Phone 020 7924 0333 for details of transport from across Britain.

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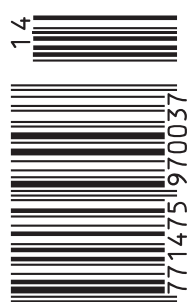
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